WILLIAM B. CAIRNS COLLECTION
OF
AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS
1650-1920
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to
FOAM OF THE SEA,
And Other Tales.

FOAM OF THE SEA,
And Other Tales.
BY
GERTRUDE HALL,
Author of “FAR FROM TO-DAY,” “ ALLEGRETTO,"
"VERSES," ETC.
BOSTON:
ROBERTS BROTHERS.
1895.

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University Press:
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE, U.S.A.

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TO
FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.

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FOAM OF THE SEA.

FOAM OF THE SEA.

THE
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HE sea on that day was wonderfully still, — so still that it was inevitable each mortal should murmur, gazing over its innumerable smile, "How still the sea is to-day!".

And early it was distinguished from the sky, at its farthest line, by its darker color; but as the heat grew intenser with the approach of noon, the sky and the distance were lost behind a pure vapor, sun-saturated, laced and fringed with light. The sea under it appeared in streaks pale-gray and purple, and in its shallow places the green of chrysoprase; the foam seemed playing with dust of gems.

- -

At a little height above the wave, in the shadow of a promontory, lay a youth, his cheek on his arm, his face seaward. Beside him were a gourd, a hide pouch full of pebbles, and a hat, shallow cone of plaited grass, for coolness, wreathed about with leaves. Having divested himself of these, he was burdened with no trappings whatever.

He had lain down to rest, tired with wandering in the heat. The shade had done pleasantly to

him; approaching sleep sent ease before it through all his veins.

But sleep he did not. When his forgetful eye-lids were near meeting, always something seemed to have called to him.

He looked out, inquiring.

It was but that wonderful sea, colored like the shining inside of a shell, that wanted to be gazed on. And he complied, overcoming his slumberous-ness; he gazed-with a dawning sense finally of something unusual, indeterminable, that made him ask, "What is it with the sea, to-day?"

Without losing its effect of peacefulness, it had taken on a little more movement. Long ripples rolled in obliquely, the light side pearly, the shade

side purplish; the foam leapt higher, snowily flashing, champing at the rocks, working forever on pale green a dissolving silver pattern. Sea-birds. skimmed it with fair gray wings, black-tipped. These things the eye took easily account of; but having summed the occasions for the eye's wonder and delight, the heart wondered still that itself should be so implicated. "What is it with the sea?" the youth asked. He rose from lying on his side, to sit with his chin on his knees, looking steadily over the water.

He had stared so long that the light had ceased to dazzle him. When he looked away he saw through a sanguine mist in which swam fiery blots; impatient of it, his eyes went back to the sweet glare.

"It is nothing," he said at last within himself, surrendering the conviction of a moment before that his attention was wanted to some lovelily strange development,-"nothing!"

But the aimless eagerness quickened in him would not be quieted at once; as the pulse of a man drawn from sleep by the sound of his love's calling will not subside on the instant of his finding he dreamed. The blood more forcibly flowing expanded his heart. He sighed, oppressed. So it was always; no promise kept, nothing ever enough! There was not space enough, though the eye reached the sea's boundaries, and lost its path in the blue; there was not air enough, though many lips had their proper fill; not perfume enough, though one buried his face in the flowers; not beauty enough, not enough delight! Or else there were all these things in inexhaustible measure, but the eye, the sense, were not of strength to grasp them. Whichever the truth, eternal want followed on it,- divine dissatisfaction!

— .

The youth did not clearly think these things, but his sigh escaped from the mood that breeds such thoughts. He stretched out his hands a moment, indefinably tormented.

He lay down quietly at length, grown reasonable again and ordinary. His eyes dwelt on the sea; his thoughts wandered. They touched naturally upon small events of the morning: one moment he saw a charming head shine in a shower of light;

he approved of it in memory, unemphatically. "So hair should be," he commented. "The more it takes of brightness from the sun, the lovelier to the eye. She is more white than others, that also is good. What is this?"

-
He lifted himself on his elbow, and looked, listening.
-
A long note, beginning softly, swelling to an unlikely loudness, yet without losing its sweetness, growing till it seemed to fill all the dome of light with sound, troubled his heart to its very root. Of so strange a quality was this note that when it died the sense doubted it, even though the nerves trembled as if with its vibration, and the ears were full of its echo. The youth looked from one direction to another. He could never be sure, but it seemed to him, as he turned where something stirred, that part of a rock crumbled into the sea; and as it was submerged, a flash of belated intelligence told him the vanishing thing to have been, not the rock, but a dark being with features almost human, silvery eyes, clumps of sea-weed where hair is on man. The fragment last to go under had been a rugged arm holding up a shell.
All was still while with breath suspended he looked. Nothing followed. A delusion, that he heard that sound? A waking dream, that he saw that object? He often saw what none else did. Often and often he had been called dreamer. One must be patient of self-given pain.
By twos and threes a flock of land-birds now

flew out from shore, and a little beyond the rocks. fluttered over a space where the water frothed softly and incessantly, - dainty white birds with rosy bills and claws, birds of a dark cloud-color with shimmering collars all hues in one. They uttered soft cries; the balancing movement of their wings seemed an expression of delight. He could see no reason for the foam curling as it did about that spot, weaving and ravelling across a background of delicate green: there was no reef, yet bubbles rose, rose, each taking a moist spark of light, shining like a tender, laughing eye, winking itself out and rounding again, curious and mirthful.
-
It was borne on the intent watcher that others than he were curious of yonder space over which the birds hovered. The water was cleft by mighty fins flashing joyously above the surface, as if the creatures owning them swam in exuberant mood: their wakes all converged to one point; now a broad rollicking tail showed between two crested waves, now a silvery-green fish-face.
High in the air stopped in its flight, and hung poised, a bird with snowy wings far outstretched. Its long and graceful neck was curved back so that the sudden sound it uttered seemed an exultant praise to the Lord of light himself. From its

beak dropped what perhaps it had been carrying
for its nest, a flower in tint like the blush of dawn.
The wave caught it, swung it from side to side,
gently cradling it in foam.

Again that note, swelling from a breath, filling
the universe with an immeasurable trembling glad-
ness; the sky seemed tenderly to laugh, the waves
laughed with little choked sobs of overgreat joy.
"What is it?" the youth cried, clasping his
head, while his heart, irresistibly drawn into the
general ecstasy, nigh melted; and yet sweat of un-
conquerable awe pricked through his brow. "Is
it the fulfilment of all my life? Is it the meaning
of twilight moments in which I longed for I know
not what? When I had reached the end of my
desires and was not satisfied, is this the thing be-
yond that I thirsted for? Is it at last something
enough?" (These things he asked, simple youth,
not in fact, but in effect!) The emotion that
surged in him was more than he could do with ;
he was swooning, his head swam, but his eyes
never left the spot where floated a rose.
The sun broke through a thin cloud, dropped a
sheaf of rays; the water they smote became softly
rippling gold, the foam they touched from white
grew faintly rosy. Then he saw, this mortal
saw
He brushed his hand across his eyes to clear his
sight that the straining blurred, to make sure that
he actually saw. His effort defeated itself; his
eyesight grew more blurred. The vision was slip-
ping from him; he crushed his hands to his eyes,
then stared desperately, - he could not bear it to
vanish! The sanguine haze that had before dimmed
the shady places only was possessing all. He

-
-
battled to pierce it, it grew denser. Was the
wonder gone, or was he robbed, shut out from it
by the failure of his dazzled eyes? He gave a cry,
and, with all the gathered power of his will, looked.
Vainly, shadow lay over all; he caught through
it only the monotonous, meaningless, everlasting
swinging of the sea. He cast up his arms and beat
them down on the sand, and buried his face in them.
The mechanical brain gave him over and over again,
as if in mockery, a trifling phrase it had shaped
before, "So hair should be, sunny gold. She is
whiter than others."
-
-
He lay unconscious of the downward day, the
gold-dust sunset, the long suspense of light broken

at last by the moon. He staggered to his feet at the ringing, as he thought, of a human voice in the distance, revolted at the thought of being approached by any person whatsoever. He sped as a deer in the direction of the woods. Having reached them, he drove further and further into the cedar-scented darkness, diverging at every moment from his previous course, making always toward the spot of densest gloom, never satisfied that it was sufficiently secluded. He stumbled down hollows, he climbed heights. Suddenly sick of wandering, broken with weariness, he dropped on the ground without a second's care for his surroundings, giving a great sigh that at last he was free to brood forever on the image in his brain.

-

After the long search for a thicket impenetrable,

he had halted in a stately grove, not too closely grown with trees whose leaves being slender and small made not a heavy shadow. On a slope it stood; certainly at some time it must have been in power to furious sea-winds; the mighty trunks vaguely outlined on the dark had the tormented look of trees yearly twisted and shaken in the storm; even on this night of peace their muscles were knotted to resist, their crowns lowered in defiance; when the soft wind streamed through them, it seemed to blow them pale with the remembrance of Aquilon.

The youth pressed his face on his arms. He could bring back perfectly the impression he called, so often as he wanted, but not for so long. The over-anxious mind striving to fix itself too firmly, the delicate tissue of the vision broke under its clutch. He groaned, exquisitely tantalized. He summoned it up again imperiously. It shone a moment, absolute. He tried to grasp it still closer, it melted. And so until the poor head was too, too tired. It thought to be continuously weaving into itself that golden sight, taking possession of it forever; but it was dropping the web for long spaces, when the passing moments caught and ravelled it. Darkness and a little, pitiable, puny dream took hold on the earth-born head at last, that meant to lose no moment of its delight.

A long creeping of terror brought into sight the gray-green trees, shimmering in the bluish half-light. He hid his face from the day. Wretch ! that had slept, and let the heavenly visitant slip

away. But no,
no! sleep had not undone him!

Here it arose again, his delight, fresh as if first from the sea.

—

He had no knowledge of warming, cooling day;
sunset bloodshed among the clouds; peering pearly
suspicions of the moon; dawn cold as a rose pressed
to the cheek. Somewhere were stiffness, suffering,
chill, but not here, here in the glowing, pleasure-
haunted head. All consciousness withdrew more
and more to that enchanted seat; there at last it
became as a bird that could fly a little distance,
then further, returning without wonder at this lib-
erty. In the bird's ken were two things: a shining
sea, wonder bearing sea! and a heavy, immovable
body, damp with dew, full of strange pain.
A rustle that was not the wind grew into hear-
ing; human voices faintly resounded through the
twilight grove. The bird, alarmed, dropped from
its floating, and settled in the head; the instinctive
ear made itself sharp.
The prostrate youth knew the voices that dimly
reached him. He lay still, not questioning with
his repugnance to being discovered. He heard a
voice lifted to call him. His heart trembled as if
by an old physical habit of emotion connected
with that voice, but he made no answer. The
footsteps died, and the voices. He gave a long
sigh of ease.
Untimely it seemed he rejoiced, for here, here
again were the noisome voices, and near his ear.
Strange, they had come into hearing when the
2

light was blue as at morning, and they were still
in hearing, but it was sunset, - yes, for a rosiness
rained down among the trees.
Warm hands were touching him. He heard a
voice full of the suggestion of tears there was
no time to shed, saying, "He is so cold! Feel,
cripple, feel all over, if he has any hurt. He
may be bleeding. Oh, how cold he is! Lift him
against you, put his head on your breast, and warm
him. I will be warming him too!"
He felt a glow of arms and breast against him;
he half opened his eyes, and saw, as he knew he
should, the face of his little brown mate.
She burst out laughing through tears. "He has
looked! Cripple, he is well! Give him from the
gourd. Oh, joy of mine, what has happened to
you? Have you fallen and broken yourself? No,
it must have been the sun melting your head; it
was such a fierce sun, and we found your hat lying.
We have been looking for you never-ending days.
My feet are blood, but it does not matter at all!
Joy of mine! Joy of mine!"
She put her arms about his body, and pressed
him so that he groaned. She drew away from him
frightened, and regarded him with a trembling face.
"Poor-poor-" she murmured, smoothing him
with her palm, fearful of doing anything else to him,

lest he should groan again and cleave her heart. He was looking at her through his half-closed eyes. A doubt came into her mind, and with it a growing fear of ill, that though he looked, he did

not see her. Tears began dropping from her eyes, that she kept fixed upon his the while, to lose no glimpse of recognition.

"How dark you are!" He spoke in a just audible voice.

"You are very, very dark. Your hair is almost black!"

She continued looking at him a moment; her tears had stopped. She turned to the old creature that was upholding his head, and inquired gravely, "What does he mean?"

The one questioned touched his forehead, and whispered, "He does not know. It is the sun."

Together they got the youth to his feet, and the old man taking one of his arms across his shoulders, and the woman taking the other, they helped him on the way. Their progress was slow; the old man, whose lower limbs were curiously misshapen, hobbled in his gait; the woman's feet had been hurt by the stones; the youth was faint, and went with no care to make himself an easy burden. It was growing dark, besides.

After many stations they came out at last under the open sky. They were on the hillside, the sea below. A little light crept back from the horizon, like the last wave of a tide at ebb. The youth's chin lay on his breast; he had not spoken, but let himself submissively be led. He lifted his face a moment, and hesitated, when, approaching the human habitations, he heard mingling voices in the dusk; but yielded to the gentle impulsion of their arms, and came patiently to his own dwelling, a

cave in the hillside, with its solid wall to the sea, its opening, as you stood inside, full of stars. He stretched on his bed of leaves; he took what they gave him without resistance or acknowledgment. It penetrated through his dream now and then that he was spoken to, but the idea that there could be a necessity to answer did not follow.

When all was quiet, he felt the warmth of a soft body against his side. Black was the interior of the cave, but his head could kindle within itself a light that spread through him sweetly, though for single fleeting moments, the satisfaction of every sense. In his instinct to repel everything that diverted him from the pursuit of his delight, he withdrew from the gentle contact of his companion.

Far in the night, his peace was broken by the sound of subdued talking. He heeded it little at

first, but as his weary brain became less powerful to compel back the perfect repetition of an ecstatic moment, it drew sighs from his vain attempt to be deaf. An impulse to rise and get away from this close, dark place full of irritating human murmurs, to reach the verge of the sea, and lie in reach of the spray, there to dream his dream over more vividly than yet, was strong within him. But a curious new timidity was strong likewise; a dislike to fac ing any opposition, or having to speak a word; and he could see dimly on the little mound at the mouth of the cave the persons whose talking disturbed him, the girl that had been his mate, and the old hob- bler. He would have to pass them. He lay re-

signed, - now trying to abstract himself, now half listening to their talk that fell clear on the night stillness, wondering if they must not soon weary and cease.

The starlight redeemed them from the darkness; their forms were touched with vague light at the salient points. The old man sat on the top of the knoll; his old goat-face was clumsily outlined as if against a blue curtain, star-sown. The girl lay a little below on the sward, her face to the sky.

"What do you think they are?" she asked, a sort of awe in her tone.

He looked up, crowding his forehead into deep furrows, his lips, that when they shut met in a bitter, coarse line, dropping open like a child's.

"They are eyes," he said at last. "Surely that can be seen."

66

-

and laugh!"

"Not eyes!" she said. I think they grow on a tree. Sometimes one is ripe and drops down."

"Then why have you not caught one yet? Very good they ought to be! No, babbler, they are cun- ning eyes. I know it. See them watch us, and make signs to one another

"Did they make signs?

Yes, they look at us, and shake all through with laughter. No! for they are not eyes! Why do you deceive me? They hang on a tree, and shake because the wind ruffles the boughs. Ah, me! but I should like to climb up there, far, far! Now they look large and dim, like white pebbles under

Are they laughing?

- -

the water."

"Because your eyes have tears. I know why you cry, child that may trample me."

"I cry because my feet are sore!" she exclaimed,

crying indeed.
He let her cry uncomforted, as a penalty, since she had not confided to him the truth. The one within the cave twisted upon his bed of leaves, clenched his hands and half rose, — something hurting. After a moment the weeping was suppressed. He dropped back, listless.
"There! there!" he heard the old man's voice; "does that make them better? They are cool,- they are cool. I know which are the best leaves. I know many things, babbler, that I have never told you yet. When the day is fair, and one may be lying in the sun, or walking abroad among the smiling flowers, or splashing in a pool, there is no need to bring out the curious things from the memory-cave. But when the storm is clamoring, and one must be huddling in shelter, then it is fit to show forth the things that are not known of all, and make the cold wet forgotten. I can tell you many things, child that shall trample me. Are you listening? No later than to-morrow I will take you in the woods, high up, high up! You shall see wonders. We will sport and laugh together in a den that is lined with growing green. It has a hole in the middle, full of water, wherein I keep a gleaming fish. There I have taken admirable things found in the woods when I went wandering alone, while you and the farseeing eyes idled together, not -

wanting me. I have nuts more than you ever saw at one time, and roots that I only know where to find, better than any you get; I have handfuls of feathers dropped from the wings of birds, and the cast-off garment of a serpent, and many empty shells of those hurtling, sidling creatures we see on the sands, fine to toy with. I have stones that shine like rime, and gum off certain trees, so pleasant as it melts. Much else, but you shall see with your eyes. We will go as soon as the sun has come; and, your feet hurting, I will let you ride on my back; my feet are hard as a goat's, the stones never cut them. How you will laugh, babbler, when I give you so many things! I will make you a whistle with a reed, and crack nuts for you. We will frolic!"
66
'Cripple, is it that the sun has hurt his head? Strange things that I have heard come back to my thought how sometimes a man has gone into the wild, and seen, or done, or suffered none knew what, and come back having forgotten all that knew him. Cripple, did you think that he had forgotten me? Oh, cripple, some say that we ought to put food and the pleasantest things we have on the verge of the sea, for it to take, else evil will come from the sea; it will send forth a strange beast to frighten and

devour us; it will make worse and worse storms;
rise howling, and wash up the shore, and drag away
all it can reach. I have never put anything at all,
not so much as a branch with berries; I never think
of it in the daylight, only sometimes when the dark-

ness comes, and I am afraid, I know not why.
Look at the sea! It is so still, — but it frightens
me, it frightens me"
-
on us,
-
--
"It were perhaps needful to put things by the
sea, to keep it from being bad; but I do not love.
the sea, it shall have nothing of mine! I will tell
you, babbler, what is more needful. What do you
think? When the trees have been long bare, and
there are no flowers, and the gray sky casts water
there wakes one who had lain asleep in
the valley behind this mountain. She sees the bare-
ness, it is not good in her eyes. She walks down
the hill, smiling to herself and singing; and stop-
ping at every naked tree fastens little green buds
on it, and pricks flowers into the mould. Every-
where she does this, till all is fair green, speckled
with pink. That done, she fashions a swarm of
white butterflies, and lets it loose over the flowers.
For her you should take things to the edge of the
woods, things you think might please her. You
must make a heap of stones, and lay them on the
top, well in sight. She will come in the night and
take them."
"Yes, cripple.
was very dark?
But what did he mean, that I
You are very dark!' that is
what he said. My hair is not blacker than before.
Every one's hair is black. No, that is not true!
Cripple, the hair of the square-shoulder's mate is
not black! In the morning before we parted, I
walked a little of the way with him, and we passed
her. She was bathing in the stream with her little

son; they were laughing and playing. The sun.
fell through the trees on her hair, and it was not
black, it was - I know not how; it looked almost
-
like shining sand. Oh, cripple, - cripple —
-
""
"This is child's talk. Be still, or I will bite
your finger till you beat me. What ails the far-
seeing eyes, but that he is too weary to speak?
He lost his way, and had no water. He will tell

you himself, when he has slept enough, and the great heat of his body is somewhat cooled. He will tell you, and fondle you enough. What can be ailing a man who sheds no blood, and can use every part of his body? He will talk and laugh to-morrow, more than I like. But if you want hair like shining sand, you shall have that too, babbler. The old goatman that all the maids ran away from, mocking, whenever he came with gentlest wooing, can get you all that the square-shoulders gets for his mate. Ah, I can tell you many a thing, babbler; I do not tell all I see, not while the sky is fair. I save it for the storm, when we are crouched together in the cave, listening to the beating rain, and you are frightened at the wind, and cry out in the dark, 'Cripple, speak something!'"

"

— -

Cripple, what did you say that you could get for me, such as the square-backed gets his woman?"

""

Why," and he chuckled softly, "anything he can get, I can. Listen, child that shall trample me with the little wounded feet, child that was the

least afraid of me. While you and he take pleasure together in the shade, where am I, babbler?- where is the forgotten goatman?- but in the woods, high up, far away; in the woods that are good to him, that spread over him shadows full of sleep, that touch him with leaves and dewdrops, and scatter nuts for him, and fill his eyes with green delight. In the woods he roams alone. One day

-

- listen well!- he comes where he can hear the breast of the hill beat. He stoops and lays his ear to the earth he grows blind with tears, for he thinks his head is lying upon his mother's breast. He must get closer to her. He rises and goes where the beating grows louder, ever louder. He comes in a rocky valley: blocks of black stone bigger than I can show you; trees bigger than I can tell you, cling on the rocks with great gray feet, like birds that will never loose their hold, but sit brooding forever on their own black shadows. The beating of the hill's breast is loudest there. As he pushes onward, climbing over the tumbled rocks, he comes suddenly in sight of a wide cave-mouth full of sunset-light; he sees a brightness in the midst of it, a living plant of light with long waving leaves. He is afraid, and lies low among the rocks. And then what sees he? In the red light is a great black man beating, beating upon a block of stone that supports the clump of agitated leaves. He has a wise and cunning face. He beats and

beats, fashioning somewhat. There stand watching
him two beings marvellous strange, like men only

to the loin, beyond that most like those fleet four-
footed beasts that rush past us sometimes on the
upland, with thumping hoofs and long-hair floating
tails. One of these is colored in his latter body
like a dappled white cloud, but in his upper body
like pale sunrise mist; his face is smooth, and his
hair falls over his back shining and curling in rings
the color of the square-shoulder's mate's, sand in
the sun.
The other creature is in his latter body.
black as the night, yet glossy; in his upper body
brown like me; his face is blackly bearded. He
holds an arc and arrow larger and mightier than
those we use, all but the square-shoulders,
mark me, who gets his arrow-stones we know not
whence. They speak, I cannot tell what, being far.
Then comes the black man to the dappled creature,
lifts one hoof, and holds it on his knee; beats upon
it while the owner stands still, unoffended, and
watches him down over his shoulder; lifts another
hoof, and beats upon it; so on each of the four
hoofs. The dappled creature when it is done
stamps a little, kicks out with his hind heels, and
gallops gayly two or three rounds among the rocks
that ring under his tread. His companion hands
his arrow to the black one; the black one thrusts
it among the luminous red and yellow leaves, beats
on it, rubs it against the stone. Then what see I?
In the bloody light beyond the stone, the face of
the square-shoulders, eager and shining. He
watches the black man working-I see the teeth
of his smile. He takes from his back a quiverful

-
of arrows, and does to them as he has seen the
black one do. Now the twofold creatures gallop
away, chasing one another with shouts and laugh-
ter. The black one and the square-shoulders are
left; they talk together like friends of old. The
plant of light withers down; darkness falls. I
was afraid. Unseen I crept away among the rocks,
and when I had come to the woods, I hurried. But
now is known to me where the square-shoulders
gets his tools that make us wonder, the thin, shin-
ing stone that divides a hard thing in two as if it
were soft, the goad that is better for bringing low
a flying kid than the pebble cast from a sling.
Babbler, I will tell you. I saw the black man so
do to a dark object that it grew bright and shin-
ing. In the same way no doubt does the square-
shoulders to his woman's hair. I will go again to
the throbbing valley; I shall not be afraid of a

thing twice known. I will learn what is done in the cave. The black man shall give me too a cutting wedge. Will not then various defer to me, and serve me as they do the square-backed, for wonder and for fear? But you, babbler, will not do more than at any time.
You will but think the good
-
tool your own, use it, and trample me cheerfully –
as think not but I am willing you should."
""
Cripple, what a strange thing you have told me concerning that woman's hair! Cripple, it were good to go there again-
""
"Will you come? Will you come? We will
You shall hide among the rocks,
go to-morrow.

while I get speech with the black man.
come ?"
Will you
"How can I leave him when he is like this? It would be as if we had gone, and taken no water with us
""
"But I will fill full the big gourd! Fear not!"
"You understand nothing! I cannot say my meaning! With me, if we left him behind so, it would be, though I drank from your gourd frequently, as if I had no water. You know how hard it is, when you walk on and on in the heat, and find no spring; you burn, you open your lips in pain, you want to weep.
With me it is so when
he is away; and when we come together, it is as if I drank."
"
The youth in the cave again moved comfortlessly on his bed, thrashed the leaves with his outflung arm, as one tortured in a dream. The talking stopped. He half-consciously put a hand forth in the dark; it was softly seized and held, while it seemed that a bird's wing stroked it. He allowed this to be.
Light laughing voices came in at the cave's mouth with the earliest rosy ray. He knew them: the voices of the babbler's sisters come to ask concerning himself. He heard the babbler telling them to be still, for he slept: the sun had dulled his head, the cripple was
curative leaf to lay on it.
gone to the woods for a
She would keep him all
day sleeping in the darkness; let them be silent and go.

Then he appeared at the cave's mouth; and, meeting the light, steadied himself with his hand against the side, shielding his eyes.
The eldest had
On the dew-silvered mound were scattered half a dozen brown girls, much like one another but for the little difference in their ages.
a tiny baby on her arm, and led another, little bigger; the second was deftly twisting grass into a hat, hardly looking at her fingers while she wrought; the youngest had plucked blue flowers as she came, and was winding a hair about their stems. Their chatter ceased a moment at his appearance. They looked at him, their pleasant faces full of interest and kindness.
He did not look at them, but off at the misty sea. The light was more than his sight could bear; the eyeballs seemed to shrink between his dull, dropped eyelids. Only through the veil of his lashes could he endure the day; it looked altered and gray.
"What ails the farseeing eyes?" asked one of the sisters. "His face is changed-"
He stumbled past them without a word, and increasing his unsteady speed, made in the direction of the point where he had fatefully laid him down to rest, once, languid with the heat.
runner.
He
He heard a light thud of following feet, and the approaching hurried breath of the
turned like a fierce, shy beast at bay. The babbler stopped too, clasping her little hands in trouble. He motioned her back whence she came; without speaking, he ordered her to leave him alone. She

looked a moment, hesitating, into his face, all the lines of which were grown sad and stern and withal august. Mutely she obeyed, to the extent at least of going no further; she sat down precisely where she had stood when he forbade her, and there remained, a forlorn little heap of dejected femininity.
The golden day no doubt passed sweetly for that simple people, living in the natural homes of the hill. It was good to lie on the green in little groups, and follow the flight of clouds and of birds, watch the foam forming and fading on the unharvested sea. Where are gray beards and mothers with tiny folk, young maidens and youths, will be much pleasantness: for are not the elders full of strange tales; do not the toddlers make all laugh with their babblings about small creatures in the grass, and their callow play? As for men and maids, when had not they many agreeable devices?
And the hungry sought the honey-bee's store, found the goat and took her milk; the careful

ranged the woods gathering nuts and berries and seeds for the days when it would be cold; the bold pursued the woodland creatures, less as yet for the delight in chase and strife, than the prize of a skin to cover the body in wintry season; the deft of their hands hollowed gourds for carrying water, wove baskets and hats. Still, most of the lovely day was spent by most at ease, in rest, with head in the shade and feet in the sun, and in harmless contrivings for pleasure.
-

While the sun hung above the sea, no fear or disquiet was with them, except such as lodged in any breast for its individual reasons, love and change and death having been from the beginning; but when the darkness came, a vague sadness possessed the general mind. The whispered moan of the sea seemed a foreboding voice; that red shooting-star, a threat; the howl of a beast in the wood cut short the breath. Then, each drew nearer to those nearest, and felt mistrust for the more removed, the unseen, out in the dark. Till sleep came, and restored the unthinking gladness of the morning. The farseeing shunned his companions. Unchanged to all appearance, he was become a stranger to them. He would not speak when they questioned him, but turned away moodily. He stumbled in going, like one half blind, and was ever seeking the same rocky point of the coast, whence he looked over the sea.
-
The blank, monotonous daily sea, - the sea that everyone saw, plain green and blue and gray; not again for a minute as once. And his thought was becoming ever less able to recapture and hold fixed the grace of one fleeting moment; it seemed to have spent all its gold and pearl, it could lend no more, and looked vainly to borrow. Life was ebbing out of a memory. The mind could trace a dry pattern, but not fill it with enchantment; it could say by rote the words of a spell, but not force into being the thing evoked. And he would not be reconciled! If it were gone forever, substance and

shadow, there seemed no reason left for continuing to breathe. But he must-he must by his longing bring it back! Yet to wait patiently was meet: Had it not come unexpectedly, all in a moment? So it must come again and he be there to not miss it. His sight and the sea seemed to have grown one.
But the purpose was dropping from behind his fixed eyes; the sickness of long disappointment had sapped the strength of his endurance; in his

human smallness he began hating at last the thing he loved, because it made him suffer. The presumptuous spirit of man has not stopped at calling even gods ungrateful, when they gave nothing in return for great love.

So he watched with a worn, mechanical eye, numb in spirit, not knowing what to do on earth if this occupation now were gone. Until one day, as he watched, the long-empty sea gave something to his hungry sight. At the point his eyes were fixed upon, dawned an object.

dawned an object. He could not distinguish, for it was misty with distance; but could not conceive of its being but the thing he wanted. A cry of joy broke from his lips, he held out his arms ecstatically. He heard his cry echoed, not far from his side, and repeated from several points above, behind. He turned quickly. He caught sight of the babbler only half hidden behind a rock. She was looking aghast over the water. He looked around; he saw others, companions and kinsmen, that had followed him to spy upon him. They

were staring over the water with anxious faces, shading their eyes. One suddenly gave a cry of terror, and turning his back to the sea, fled, followed by the rest. The babbler, running after them, stopped short and screamed to him, "Come! oh, come! oh, come!" Without a word he picked up a splinter of rock, and threw. He saw it strike; he turned his back to her, and looked again over the sea, quivering with rage. It was gone.

He did not wait that day for all light to have died from the face of the sea before he went back to his cave. Besides that peace was gone from his contemplation, a natural man-instinct made him, knowing that he had been secretly watched by certain men, wish to be among them, presenting his ready front.

He

He walked slowly among the groups gathered beside the chiefest spring as always at the sunset hour, drinking before they repaired to sleep.

had come in an unfriendly mood; but there succeeded to this a better feeling, he found a forgotten sweetness in doing again what he had so long now not done, a pleasure in the familiar scene and faces.

Little alive as he was to outside circumstances, he could not be long in perceiving that his presence was looked on with wonder and suspicion. If he joined a group, constraint fell upon it, it dispersed. He felt dislike and fear in the glances cast upon him. He passed his hands over his face. Was he so changed? For this was not wont to be. The

women certainly always welcomed him and smiled, reason enough for some of the men to like him little. Now it was the women, the young ones, showed most plainly their aversion.
—
He bent over a smooth space of the spring. Yes, he was changed; dull-eyed, with no fresh red on his lips, he was grown unsightly. He rose, humiliated, but only as one half awake can be, and withdrew from among these people that did not want him.
He had an impulse of returning anger in passing one of the men whose faces he had recognized among those spying on him. He was talking eagerly with the square-shoulders. "It crawled on the water with many feet," the farseeing heard him say. He cast on him a wrathful glance, and remembering his affront, could not repress a threatening gesture.
He found the babbler sitting on the mound before their cave. He looked at her for the first time in many days with an at least partly conscious vision. She seemed to him changed even as he was changed, grown mournful of eye, and long of cheek. She was little more than a child, but a more than childish trouble spoke in the dejection of her attitude.
She started at his step; she seemed for a second in doubt whether to stay or go, and kept her eyes on him, as if to guide her movements by his. She stayed; but watched him with a timorous expression, and did not say anything as he approached.
Impossible not to see, bright on her breast, a bruise.

He gathered his brows, staring at it in a curious shocked way, and pointed as who should say, "What is that?"
She was silent a moment, studying his face, then murmured, "I fell on a stone. It does not hurt."
And though her face scarcely trembled, her eyes filled with tears; she looked away. He gazed at her strangely a while, still as gray stone; then dropped on the sward beside the gentle being, and laid his head on her knees, closing his eyes.
He was roused that night by a blow on the breast, a sharp blow that bruised and tore. He leaped up with a roar. He heard a laugh of gleeful hate, the rustle and thumping of the withdrawing foe. As he came to the cave's mouth he spied the form of the goatman standing at a safe distance, whence he could start with advantage if pursued.
The far-seeing paused in the act of rushing after him, suddenly more sad than he had been angry.
Little of peace he knew in the days that ensued, less of peace than ever.
Still his desire pursued

him, drove him seaward, and kept him gazing for
the hoped thing; but less and less did he truly
look to see it. It began to seem a dream that ever
he had seen it. He forsook the ancient post where
he had so long held watch, to find at last that
himself was watched; driven blindly from within.
he wandered on the sands, climbed the furthest
rocks, explored sea-caves; and, touched now and
then with suspicion, stopped to look about if he
were followed.

At last, the vanity of all things was more burnt
into him at sickening sight of the sea than any
other sight. Still he could not bear to be among
men, beings that talked and questioned; he re-
tired to the woods, and growing wilder and more
morose, came forth from them less and less often.
Less and less unlike the tree-roots among which
he lay, he grew to be; one that watched him.
at a distance sometimes, and wept without noise,
must look narrowly to distinguish him, so little he
moved. The stillness gained in his head and his
heart at last; he was freed of his restless longing,
and lived only with the cool, quiet life of a root.
As a dumb brute that takes its pain out of sight,
and by instinct does the best for itself, he did; he
helped this suspension of thought and feeling that
gave his nature its chance of healing.
The means of life were simplified to him; he
came upon a place by the sea's edge where were
things in a heap, often renewed, come there he
never reflected how; gourds filled with the juice
of fruits, nuts, all that was most prized as food.
Toward evening he went there and filled himself.
Tranquil, tranquil days passed. He was the
only man on earth, comfortable, empty-headed,
callous-hearted. Far behind him, almost out of
sight, was the man he had been; and just in sight,
far ahead, the man he was to be,
a man that
returned among men and took up their life again;
lived in a spacious cave in simple love with a
woman who had kept a child's way of speech be-
-
-

yond the usual time, and an old man that hobbled,
a man that at once loved and loved him not.
Meanwhile, he was the only man on earth; his
days went by like dreams, their passage, their
small events only half sensed; behind him, a
dream lived down, - before, an unenfolded dream.
He came forth from the woods one day at sunset,
and found the store he looked for. Stones by some
accident set on one another lifted into view the

things left on them; flowers were mixed prettily over the food; purveying maidens, mayhap, had passed with too much, and set down something to be freer in their movements.

He ate and drank with comfortable pleasure in the operation, glad that he could fix and limit his desires to things like these, of which he could get all he wanted every day. The sea that he was facing looked pleasantly insignificant; he had as lief see it now as not see; he smiled churlishly over the vanquished sea.

He raised the gourd to his lips; he paused in the act of drinking, lifting his shoulders to his ears as if to take a blow on his back. He did not look round, but listened with twitching muscles, a consciousness that human beings were suddenly near. The murmur of their voices, and beat of their feet approached. He did not look round, thinking that all would be dispelled, and known for one of those vivid dreams that had used to torment him.

If it were a dream, it was this time of solid tex-

ture; the murmur increased, he could discern words, mixed with inarticulate sounds.

He did not look behind, still doubting it was only his ailing. A light clod hit him. He dropped the gourd that he had not removed from his mouth, and turned.

In the fading light he rapidly reviewed the familiar faces, each one known to him from his earliest remembrance. There was a supreme struggle in his breast; then, it was as if something ha dropped from his heart, as a stone that had kept it in the dark cold of the sea-depths, and now let it rise high, high, till the sunshine burst upon it. There had lain in the almost unconscious recesses of his being a terror of going back among men; he had dreaded submitting to their questions and reproaches, put it off, and still off, till grown accustomed to his shame he might have delayed forever. Now, the choice was taken from him; the ordeal he might not have had courage to face was thrust upon him. In a minute, barriers crashed through, he was to be a man again among men, no longer this lonely beast. They had come to take him back with themselves. The strange dream was ended.

He did not speak, pale, painfully smiling.

Having come just so near, they stopped.

saw with wonder that they were armed with fragments of tree and stone. He perceived that their faces were not the friendly faces he looked for.

He

"Thing of evil!" he heard. "Beast of darkness! Caller upon us of ill-fortune!"

One took a few steps toward him with threatening mien. The faces of some seemed to him full of determined hatred; others, these kept more in the background,—of distress and fear and haggard suspicion.
Then it must be a dream, this too.
"Leave me!" he faltered in the dreamy voice he would have used to a thing in his brain, and shrank a few steps away from them toward the sea. Touch me not! I am one set apart; I am set apart!"
66
66
A form in every point resembling the square-shoulders came from among the rest, his face cruel rock. Set apart! yes, set apart," he repeated in grim mocking; "set apart to work destruction! What happened this day, do you know? What happened but a few days ago? The sea, seeking for you — whom but you?—dragged away a maiden innocently bathing, dragged away my little son playing with the shells. The sea clamors for something, and will not be satisfied. Many have heard its voice through the moaning surf. It sends forth a monster that all have seen, that every time it appears comes nearer to our shores. We place offerings to appease it; all respect these we find you impiously disposing of them. It is you the sea. wants! — you, it is plain, full of hidden guilt, brooding over some black deed done; that have ceased to be a man, and become familiar with wood-swine and serpents and beasts none know by name. Impious one! Forbidden one! It is you!"
66
—
'I know not what you are speaking!" said the

-
far-seeing, with still sufficient command of gentleness, defending himself as in a trance; "I have doue no harm, except, I think, to one, who has forgiven me. As for this monster, I have not once seen it, not once! I have not offended the sea, but loved it always, more indeed than all else, until lately, when the sea was unkind to me, friends, - not I to the sea!"
——
—
"You sat watching it as long as there was light, day after day, with a scowl," said one. "From dawn to eve, there were you spying on the mysteries of the sea.
The sea would not endure that, that itself was an offence to the sea. We wondered, all, what you were doing, gazing as a big bird does on a little one it means to capture. You say you

know nothing of this monster. Ha! It rose from
the sea even while you stared; you saw it and gave
a great cry. We saw it, and cried and fled in
fear. It rose in vengeance on your insolence. It
has been prowling about our coast seeking for you
since, but you, cunning, wise, have now taken to
deep woods, and only come forth guardedly. But
it shall have you! It shall have you yet! It has
signified its will plainly enough: it will snatch
harmless maidens and children till we yield up
what it wants. We have held counsel, and all
come to the same thought; and when we find
you in the very act of drinking the sea's own
drink, taking the gifts set forth for the sea, who can
hesitate or doubt ?"
—
'Hold off!" cried the far-seeing, now insanely

exasperated; "I have nothing to do with any of
you! I choose to live alone. It is great pain to
me to speak. Friends, companions, let me alone!
But you, square-shoulders, forbear to shake that
cutting thing that all do so respect, at me! I am
sorry for your child, yes, heartily; I remember a
pretty thing playing in the stream with his mother
of the sunny hair. But forbear, I say. I fear you
not, for I shall get me one like it as soon as it
pleases me. Yes," he went on, a flash of memory
lighting his mind, and he making weapons of words
since his hands were empty, I know how and
where to get me one. I know your black man in a
cave full of sunset-light. I know your strange
creatures with four feet beside arms, and long-haired
tails. I know! I know! — "
The face of the square-shoulders, first attentive,
became rigid; his eyes shot fire. "Take him!" he
shouted. "We know what we have to do!"
himself he made a bound forward.
And
There was no struggle, for many were assailing
one disarmed.
In the face of a certain cliff that jutted high
over the sea, was a cave,
—
familiar by sight to all
that had clambered out over the farthest rocks,
never visited by any, for it was not to be reached
by climbing.
It was somewhat like the open mouth of a beast
whose throat should curve away below the under
jaw, nor could have been reached at all, but that

the square-shoulders, in his office of executor of the
general will, brought from his dwelling a marvellous
object whose length was formed of cold round rings,

one within another, impossible to sever. Having fastened this about the far-seeing, they let him down over the cliff till his feet touched the lower edge of the cave. When he stood solidly, the square-shoulders let go the strong bond, sacrificing his possession to the public good; it dropped against the stone, rattling like a silvery water-shower. The doomed brother gathered it in, and undid it from his bruised body. He was bewildered by a multitude of shrill sea-calls, the fluttering and fanning in the darkness of frightened wings that beat him about the head. When all was quiet within, he saw outside as if a flurry of leaves in the eddying wind. Gradually, as he sat quite still against the rough rock wall at the nearest safe point by the opening, the reassured birds came back; he heard. them settle themselves again, talking to one another in bird-whispers.
—
-
When he cast down his eyes, he dimly saw the sea below, shallow over the rocks, full deep between them, if in jumping one might perchance hit the deep place. But the far-seeing did not think of escape. He knew nothing of this monster, he hardly understood; he knew only that they loved him not, who had once certainly wished him no harm, and whom he once, before a strange hap blotted all things but one from his brain, had loved; that of all they chose him, verily him, to
-

expose to a thing they dreaded, — and without one dissenting voice!
-
He saw them again, their sweetly fashioned faces. all stony with the inexorableness of gentle, timid natures when they fear. Some pity had shown in some eyes, but no relenting; some lips had writhed with repressed weeping, but none said, " Forbear!" All had wanted this to be, that an evil to them should be averted by an evil to him. Not a hand had defended him, not a voice comforted; not that of any kin; not that of the cripple, his serviceable companion so long, bringing water, spreading leaves, plunging in the brush for whatever his sling-stone hit; not that of the babbler, the babbler who yet –
Then she must be dead. Nay, why? why ?
Her absence could be otherwise explained. Many wanted her; she had that soft child's-speech. She had gone to another, after the way of a woman; perhaps with the false cripple himself, who, it came back to him, had tried to pervert her from him already, one long-past night, with tales of a splendid cave up in the hill, and stores richer than even the square-shoulders', to whom many gave something of their own, in homage, because he had the

strongest arm and the awe-compelling thing that cut.
He looked over the sea, blue-black and dead, under a swept sky, blue-black and spotted with inferior lights. Pale showed the little foam about the rocks; the sea's breath came in husky sighs. He contemplated his case with little feeling for its

practical horror; it was not that a monster should devour him, or that he should perish of want, at this moment hurt him: that seemed still so remote, so unlikely; it was that all had vowed him to death, all.
No one was near to reproach or complain to; but the sea was there. "It is you, my bad friend," he said to the sea, "you that have done this. You showed me a marvel so bright it made the rest of things dark and unsightly. I wasted myself in the desire to see it again; but again, you, cruellest, would not show it. You met me ever after with a sneering closed face, like a hoarding old woman. with a secret shut in her fist. Then at last, because I must live, because I must be a man again and undo much harm done in my wayward waiting on you, I made myself trample down my longing like a plant. I would not feed it with water, it lost vigor. I drew it up by the roots, and saw it wither. I was free of you, I could look on you without a thought. My breast was at last as stone toward you, shimmer as you might, sparkle and unroll your soft colors full of insidious promises. To what end? You see to what end! Then will you not, cruel friend, because I am soon to die by those for whom I gave up you, let me see once again what it is I lose my life for, that I may declare it worth a life? Will you not show it me, for my comfort and for your triumph? Will you not be avenged on those in respect of whom I slighted and renounced you, by filling me full of joy in the

-
doom they lay on me? Show me again what I saw, sea, beloved, beloved sea, treacherous as you are! Be kind this once to mortal man! Show me, and I will forget them all again, even the brown eyes of my first dream that you never wholly conquered. You shall conquer them now, as they have forgotten me. Have me back! Have me back!"
-
-
-
The sea was hopelessly still and dark. The far-seeing gave out a sobbing breath, and stretched forward with his face on his arms. The image lived there, in his head, after all; if not the sea

would give it back, memory should, yes, it should. There, then, he was on the sand again, at a little height over the wave Good. The air was hot, oh, hot! He was near sleeping. Then came a sound. He deliberately created a thrill to follow it. Birds flew out from land, fair birds; big fishes came flocking from all sides. A flower dropped from above, that the foam caught and cradled. And then? And then? With weary diligence he built up every remembered detail to usher in the great vision. His courage dropped at the consciousness of great effort, and all within him was still for a moment, sick. Then his brain proceeded with its stubborn reconstructing. The pearly clouds parted, just so, and just so let down a shower of rays, pale, watery at first, then brightening. Then, that note again! He shuddered violently, and lifted himself on to his hands, not searching his inner being, but listening with his very ear. He had actually heard the
-

note; it had cut on the outworn dream as crimson on gray. It was a second before he could readjust himself to the open-eye world, make real this cave, that nocturnal sea. The note he had heard was repeated, it was a long call from below, where the foam was pale about the rocks. He listened with a bursting heart. "Joy of mine! Anguish of mine! Great-eyes, far-seeing one! Answer me! Answer me!"
But he could not, - he could not answer.
The voice came wafted again, crumpled with tears, each call ending in a mournful little wimmering. The night-wind lifted it to him; now it seemed to come from one place, now one a little farther, now a little nearer, wandering sorrow.
He struggled to make a sound, make words, but after a minute in which the beating of his heart was in his throat, suspending the voice, all his being, breaking bonds, seemed to come rushing forth at his lips and eyes. He lay on the floor of the cave, with clenching and unclenching hands reaching out over the edge into the night, weeping as if his whole body must dissolve.
"Are you there?" came the bold and timid sad voice. "Will you not speak? It is the one belonging to you that calls-”
Then he found strength to say, "Little one-happy-maker-babbler —" But his tears had so smothered the words that he knew they could not have reached her. He tried to give a simple cry,

it came forth a groan almost inhuman, as of

one perishing.
He heard by her answering shout that she had
heard; then he held his breath, listening. He
heard her weeping aloud, and gave himself over
again to weeping, recklessly, on and on. Sky and
sea heard their passion spend itself; they were
still at last, exhausted.
"Why do you weep, babbler?" he called down.
to her, his voice still convulsed. "I weep only
because I am glad."
At that her tears burst forth afresh,
just to hear her.
and his,
"You must not cry
All is well now. I
"Hush!" he said at last.
like that! Why do you cry?
am altogether happy. If I could only touch you!
I hold my arms down over the edge so far as I
can, and the ends of my hands burn with longing
to reach you. Hold up your arms toward me,
babbler!"
"Joy of mine," broke from her, rapidly, "I
shall never go from this spot! Here am I so long
as you are up there. If the beast takes you, he
takes me; if you have nothing to
there, neither have I down here.
I am here while you are there.
that it is so!"
66
Oh, babbler
little one
eat or drink up
Always, always
Never think but
happy-maker! I
have been so alone!" and his voice was smothered.
"I was up in the hill when they took you," she
said, a little fiercely," or it would not have been

so easy! The cripple knew what they meant, and
prevailed on me to see his cave this day. Him
would I willingly with my hands pick into little
pieces, like grass. Yes, I would, though he did it
that I might not die of grief to see you with my
eyes be ill-used. He has been good to me these
long heavy days, yet would I tear him like grass,
for making me smile up there with his singing
and prancing, while they were putting you here.
Oh-oh!-
""
"Ah, weep not! weep not! I cannot weep any
more. I can think of nothing but that it is an
old happy moment come over again. You have not
forgotten it, babbler: I had seen you always only
among your sisters; you would never look when
I looked. But you lost yourself in the woods, and

it grew dark. My brothers and your brothers scattered, seeking you. We called, and you called. We heard your voice wandering far among the trees I found you! In the darkness, burning with gladness, I found you !”
-
"Joy of mine, how you lifted me up! - how I was not afraid any more!"
-
"It is with me again as then, babbler, I have found you! I was not so happy in that moment as now. I am a wave that washes all about and over you, brown child bathing in me! Are you holding up your arms? Are you thinking your cheek is against mine?"
There was a pause in speech, with only murmurs they made toward each other. Then she asked,

raising her voice so little he barely heard it, and would not have known what she said but that a sense which was not hearing conveyed her meaning to him. "What has ailed you these long days? For what were you always and always looking over the sea? What had you seen?"
There was a long silence. Then came from him, in a voice unlike the one she had been hearing, an accent hard and quiet and distinct,
(6
-
more fair,
-
more fair than
Ask no more.
'A woman - grown from the foam and the sunshine; more fair, -
anything the eye has ever seen!
Ask never again."
"So fair!" moaned the babbler.
"So fair!" he affirmed loudly.
"Be still, little babbler," he spoke, after a moment, dropping his voice as if to be heard of her alone, and not of some great presence wandering over the sea." Truly your faithful, fond voice coming to me forsaken in the dark was more to torture and console than her floating beauteous form; truly, babbler, truly. Can you hear if I speak so low ? I knew a better joy then than ever since I live. But I must not be reminded of her. No, heed me: powerful, powerful is she, and the poor mind — oh, hate me not! - once beset of her has not strength to be sure it will cast her out. I am wholly yours; I grow warm and near to weeping at the thought of your dusty little feet, your hair with the wreck of flowers tangled in it, your face that weeping mars, and laughing discomposes, your
-
-

Her face is placid and
-
needs, your weakness.
cool, she only and ever faintly smiles; nothing
could shake her grace one jot from its perfection.
I know in this moment a sweeter thing than she,
that pierces the heart more throughly, which is
the voice of your love lasting through wrongs;
and I would choose it at this moment though she
lay rocking in the foam, and called me twice, —
yes, twice! But I must not think how she opened
slowly her eyes, and they were a blue surprise, -
another blue than sky or sea. Be content, babbler,
to let me forget!"
There was silence again.
-
"Are you weeping, or laughing?" he asked after
long listening.
“No,” came a small, weary voice, as if from very
far below, "I am thinking only."
"Do you hear nothing?"
Nothing but you when you speak."
""
"It is overhead, then. It has stopped. Who
has been listening above, and now weeps or laughs?
"It was only the sea in the rocks, far-seeing.
Joy of mine, will you say once again that you
choose me,
me with the dust-soiled feet and
foolish speech, and no doubt many unpleasant cus-
toms, did you mean hunger and thirst? What did
you mean? and that I am unsightly when I weep.
Nay, I cannot help weeping even now! Will you
say again that you choose me, for he soon may
come, and even if he comes not, we have soon to
die-
""

"I choose you, babbler, I choose you. Do not
make me suffer more than need, little one, for we
are not near enough to lay hands on one another,
and by touch heal the hurt our words can give."
"I say nothing more, far-seeing, but that I choose
you too, of all and all! I will say nothing more
that is sad, but will talk, if it pleases you, as if we
were sitting on the hillock before our cave, looking
above, as so often. Look at them! What do you
think they are?"
Bright fruits growing on trees, babbler. When
one is ripe it drops down."
"No, they are eyes, far-seeing,- sad eyes looking
at us, and silently grieving. Now and then it is a
tear for us that falls-'
""

Their speech came further and further spaced.
"What is the beast?" asked the far-seeing, after a long silence, "I have never seen it; I know nothing of it."
'Ah," she shuddered, "let us speak not of it. Another tear for us has dropped from above. Kind eyes, they must close soon, blinded, for see how the light grows, like a fringed leaf, where the moon will Strange, I see little lights on the water, as if the drops from the stars were floating. Look toward the place for the moon
rise.
-
""
"I see them," said the far-seeing," they are strange. I have never seen so bright lights in the water before. And they move, they swim along. Babbler, look, look!"
"Yes, they are pretty, — they are pretty!"

The moon began lifting herself from the rim of the sea, red as if with effort to come through the bank of vapor without abatement in her speed; she rose above it, and looked down on it quietly scornful, scarcely luminous, sallow and sharp at the edge.
A shriek came from the babbler, "Look, look against the moon! That is it! It crawls on the water with many feet, it has wings! Oh, oh!—" and in very terror she began running hither and thither on the rocks and sand.
He looked in awe and amazement. It moved on the water, shadowy, with a glitter here and there. It dragged itself sinisterly along, supported by feet on the loose, shifting water; its tail left a tortuous wake. It came breasting the wave with a loathsome, cumbrous, dipping movement.
"Go, babbler!" he cried to her in horror. save yourself!"
"Go!
"No!" screamed the little creature, running to and fro. "No! I stay! He takes me first. Oh, crouch far inside!"
Then the far-seeing threw up his arms and leaped. His body, so fortune pleased, met no rock. The water closed over him. When he rose, his arms found the babbler. They clasped one another, in the madness of meeting granting no instant's respect to the law that made them sink and smother. They rose struggling for breath, and sank again clasped to one another. Then, laughing and shuddering with mingled love and horror, they struck for the open sea.
No time was to climb the stub-

born rock and flee by land, so fast he travelled, the brute with wings and feet! But he should not have them at once, thought they, poor children made great of heart by their moment's simple rapture of flesh to flesh, - not have them caught as in a trap among the rocks, or backed abjectly against the sea-wall. He should be forced to pursue them, gallant game, by water; duck for them, miss them, follow them further, capture them late, insensible of their doom, triumphant and drowned.
""
O brother!" came piercing call from the crest of the cliff behind them, and they looked over their shoulders in hurry, to see the agitated outline of the cripple; "take this to slay him with! In the eye strike him boldly! I obtained it for you of the black man, and saw him grind it sharp and deadly!" He threw something. A few silver drops dashed up where it struck and sank, eluding the hand of the far-seeing. A moment the fugitives saw the goatman wildly jumping up and down, clutching his hair.

They swam strongly, aglow for a time. Their hearts softly grew cold. They knew without looking how it came nearer, as well as from the splashing footfall, from the ever louder gleeful gurgle, as no doubt by the brightening moon it watched the bobbing of their foolish, fated heads.

With one consent suddenly they gave over the weary struggle; the dripping feet were too near for any courage to endure further. Faintly they caught one another, all power gone from them, and let their senses drift, their inert bodies float. No out-

He was
cry, no resistance when it overtook them.
aware of claws on his head, fastening in the hair, shaking him with brutish playfulness. He closed his eyes, and let be. He felt himself lifted and dragged over barriers of teeth. Ah, good, when all was said, good, after travailing so long in a too yielding element, this rest in solid jaws. Good, this stillness.

Shocked into fuller consciousness by the sense of an incongruity in what he thought, he opened his eyes. Then began a vague torture for the mind, trying to adjust what it knew with what it saw. Was this again one of those dreams? He was, or seemed to be, lying on the ground, solid, yet that moved as a bough does in the wind. Bending over him, in a light not like that of day or night, that spread from here a swinging spot of brightness, there another spot of brightness, were faces of men none of whom he knew, the like of whom he had

His eyes moved in slow wonder from
thing to thing. Overhead a great shadowy wing spread, awe-inspiring. Surely, that was the sky

beyond it, very far away, full of a dewy silveriness
he knew. He heard the rush and clatter of water,
but saw no sea.
never seen.
-
His eyes dropped. The beast was gone, so much
was sure. He was awake, where was he? Then
he knew the babbler sitting beside his head, her
drenched hair dripping over her face, her wide eyes
roving, full of question and awe. He lifted himself
to his knees, and with an uncertain motion, for the

ground swayed under him, got to her side. They
sat with their arms warm about one another, each
protecting at once, and protected.
The persons surrounding them, whose bodies were
concealed from the eye, examined them curiously,
and talked among themselves in a speech like the
chattering of birds. One, now, for whom all made
way, a man clothed as if with colored leaves of
flowers, ample and flowing, seemed to address him-
self to them; he waved his arms with some vehe-
mence, paused between his snatches of speech as if
for an answer. They said nothing, but stared with
great eyes, and held one another close. He came
nearer, benignly smiling, and looking with a charmed
eye in their nobly simple astonished brown faces,
laid on each spent swimmer a friendly hand, clearly
to express by touch what he could not convey to
them by words.
A voice, loud and authoritative, rose over the sea-
sound. At once, all but this one to whom the others
appeared to defer, dispersed from about the pair, and
devoted themselves to mysterious dealings. The
great wing with a groan changed its position. The
ground lurched. The far-seeing, his heart rising
strangely in his throat, shot to his feet, lifting the
babbler who clung to him.
They saw, over the wall encompassing them and
the strange company, the vast moonlit sea; they
saw, quite near, the hills of home, - moving past,
moving past.

IN BATTLEREAGH HOUSE.

IN BATTLEREAGH HOUSE.
THE
HE chaplain knew of the great ball to be
given at court that night. All through the
rainy afternoon, even while he toiled over his tasks
of an under-secretary, he was scheming how to get
view of the ladies in their grand court-costumes
before they left the house. He was not what could
be called ingenious, yet, inspired by the eminent
occasion, he devised several profound stratagems.
These, at the last, for a suspected inconsistency

with his calling, repelled him; and he staked the happiness of his evening on a chance. In a certain room leading from the antechamber stood a goodly large mirror; to the vicinity of this he repaired long before the time when the fair ladies should be leaving, and there tarried holding a book to the gray twilight, interrupting his reading to run over what he meant to say should any one remark on his presence in that place, -the truth, but more elegantly expressed than it could have come from him taken unawares.

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It grew too dark to keep up his comedy of studiousness; his boldness was beginning to fail, as well as the hope that it would be rewarded, when

a serving-maid entered hurriedly with a taper, and taking no notice of him, lighted all the candles in the sconces.

He closed the little volume over his finger, and joined his hands behind him, trying to look calm and casual; but at the sound of footsteps on the stair, all the assurance melted out of his attitude, - his hands unclasped, his book became a burden; he stood looking timid and uncertain as he felt.

There was a breezy rustle, a silvery clatter of feminine voices familiarly mingling, and the room was half filled by two gorgeous creatures. A tire-woman followed discreetly, and held herself ready at hand.

They appeared not to see the young chaplain, who after a moment's vain attempt to recover the little speech he had prepared, blest for once in his insignificance, abandoned himself to fate, and was caught away in the pure joy of admiration.

The older woman, without a murmur, gave precedence at the mirror to the younger, who took it without compliment. A sweet vision shone back from the glass's depths, a glory of youth, silver stuff brocaded with roses, rich lace, plumes, and pearls.

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She had come to just that ripeness that retains still all of its bloom; nothing could rival the bright clearness of her eyes, the fruitlike smoothness of her cheeks and chin and throat. She bore herself like a good-natured young divinity, - Hebe, verging on plumpness and a high color, but warily

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tarrying still well within the bounds of roundness and freshness. Her laces and silks served her well, commending themselves by contrary means, the one by imprisoning her waist with a loving tightness, the other by dropping generously away from

her beautiful bosom and arms.
She eyed her reflection seriously a moment, then broke into a deliberate smile, dimpling and displaying the finest teeth in the world. She turned, and throwing back her head ogled herself first over one shoulder, then the other. There was about her such evidence of full faith in her perfection as increased a simple observer's respect for it; he would naturally be slow to suppose that such large confidence could be misplaced.
When she had played the peacock for a sufficient time, the other woman-by the likeness, her mother-pushed her aside, and taking her place before the glass passed in review her own maturer charms. She touched her hair to an imagined advantage, displaced and replaced here a jewel, there a fold; she suddenly brought her face so near the glass that her breath misted the silver surface; she was examining a little spot which she vowed had not been visible an hour before. Quick! another patch! The maid ran for the silver box, and the dutiful daughter applied to the florid cheek a neat black comet with curving tail.
The chaplain, effaced against the wall in the shadiest corner, followed the performance with an eye not entirely absorbed. He was listening for

further sounds beyond the door. The young woman in silver-and-roses, in a mood of more than usual condescension, startled him with an amiable word, challenging him to a compliment. He came forward reddening, and faltered the best he could think of. In the midst of the attempted fine. phrase, his voice went out. His ear had caught a leisurely light tapping on the stairs.
Now a third female, no less gorgeous than the other two, swept through the door and went to the mirror, from whence the earlier beauties retired to make room for her. She fastened her eyes upon her reflection and remained in simple scrutiny, altering nothing in her adornments, nor practising any graces.
She was in full beauty, white and proud as the moon, shining with an unclouded splendor fit to drive all rival luminaries into eclipse as if with a whip of light.
The chaplain turned on her a gaze of almost religious devotion, and joined his hands.
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Tall, superb, regally attired she stood, gazing down her image as if she would make her own conquest, her brows bended black arcs, her mouth. a still more beautiful arc, rosy and disdainful, sweet with a rather formidable sweetness, provoking in every man's heart a desire to make it unbend.
The other women looked at her, no marked approval in their faces; she took no account of their

presence, and continued her survey of a face in which was confessed no possible misgiving.

While she was so occupied, and the chaplain, unconscious of all else, occupied in like manner, the younger beauty, the one in silver-and-roses, came up behind her, and rising on tiptoe, for she was shorter in stature, leaned over the voluminous folds between them, and laid her chin on the elder beauty's shoulder, so that their faces were reflected side by side. Then, looking ahead, she smiled. The first-born did not move, but to draw herself a little straighter.
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The chaplain held his breath; he did not exactly comprehend what was happening, but felt something unusual in the air. A vague excitement swelled his heart. Mistress Penelope offering to measure beauty with Mistress Berenice, was that it? And my Lady Battlereagh looking on no less complacently than if her own chick were like to carry off the palm! But what a jest! Two such could never be accounted rivals! The little upstart half-sister must surely rue her presumption confronted with the honest mirror; divine, if you pleased to say so, the young half-sister, -ay, a divine young minister of drink to the higher gods, beside the Queen of Olympus herself! Mistress Berenice could vanquish her by every feature; the habit of victory was in all her face!
The younger, however, continued smiling, -too dense, it seemed, to be put to such confusion as he had thought to see her in at the enduring comparison. Her rosy round face dimpled deliciously, youthful indeed, altogether like a flower; not a line

in it yet that did not help its beauty, no shadow between the brows, none at the corner of the lip, none in the velvety cheek,- all bloom and dew of the morning! Mistress Berenice's eyelids trembled ever so slightly, her face darkened ominously. Mistress Penelope siniled on, a false little long-drawn smile, and leaned her chin more heavily on her sister's shoulder, clasping her waist with an affectionate stress. Berenice made a sudden struggle to release herself; the other playfully tightened her hold, clinging and laughing. Berenice flashed out on her in such quick, disproportionate fury that she drew back in haste, throwing up an instinctive arm before her face.
"Eh, but you've got a wicked temper!" cried Lady Battlereagh, coming to her child's side. "Did you like so little what you saw?"
Berenice made no reply, controlled again, though the angry color had not dropped from her brow.

She affected to rearrange her hair where her sister's had come in contact with it.
The chaplain had felt his heart beat painfully at the unexpected commotion, scarcely knowing what emotion stirred it. One thing he saw to do. He got on his knees at Mistress Berenice's feet, to gather up the things she had let drop. His forehead as he stooped just brushed her broad skirt. She took them from him without a word, or any gracious recognition, as if he had been an inanimate object; and at the notice of her chair in waiting, left the room with a high head, no reference to any

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of the persons from whose presence she went, left like a white moon riding the heavens unconcerned and dazzling.
"You saw how she treated my poor child," complained Lady Battlereagh to the chaplain when all sounds of the departure had died; "when I tell my lord how vixenish she behaves herself, he will never pay heed to me. I shall call you to witness when next we have any discussion of her."
The chaplain put up a protesting hand, and his face told a vast dismay.
"What care I?" said Mistress Penelope with a shrug of her lovely shoulders, the effect of which was not lost on herself, standing once more before the mirror. "I have got half her lovers now!"
She caressed her cheek pensively with one finger.
"Poor Berenice! Do you perceive that she has grown thin of late, as well as pale? By daylight often she looks like tallow. And here," the finger halted near the ear, between delicate cheekbone and jaw, "- have you observed, madam, how her cheek sinks in, in quite a painful perceptible fashion? She will hardly be thought good-looking in a year, if she falls off at such a rate."
"I do hope no one mistakes her for my daughter, I protest I do," said Lady Battlereagh, "You must as frequently as possible, my dear Pen, refer to the fact of her being your father's by a former bed."
The chaplain felt his blood rise in amazement and indignation. They were speaking thus, and dispassionately it seemed, without appearance of

spite, of the radiant creature who had just left, drawing the gaze magnetically after her, blessing the eye with every perfection. They were speaking thus of her, who was to themselves as queen to milkmaids! So could envy qualify the functions of the eye.

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"Think you not Lord Southlands is sure to be there to-night?" asked Penelope. A merry impudence curled her lip. "I have a use for the accomplished and exquisite and elusive rake that he is. Indeed, madam, I shall not feel that I have gained my spurs, so to speak, as a woman of fashion, or can quite enter the lists with my dear Berenice, until like her I have held that monster of fickleness at the end of a chain."
"Nay, he is busy running down other game. Old Brentontowers has brought home a new wife, you've heard. And, dearest Pen, my child, I would not have you spend much of your company on him. He is an experienced entrapper, and though young in years, full old in all practices that have the female heart for prize. And what behooves it to deny it? we are frail, my daughter, we are frail!" and the good lady's large breast heaved with a sigh.
-
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"You would not have thought needful to caution Berenice," said the girl, in some disgust. "It might have been better for her had I done so."
"Now pray what do you mean, madam ?”

I vow I have always suspected she did not

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-
come from that passage of arms with him without one barb in her flesh. I saw her look his way at the assembly the other night, while he was in the midst of conducting his new amour, as was apparent to all but Brentontowers; and her eye looked the way you know, as if it would strike dead. Nay, my pretty one, if you must take Berenice's lovers, why not the latest one, whom she has not yet cast off? Why not my Lord Winter, who will make you governess of a whole colony, almost good as a queen? True, I should miss you sadly-though Betty is coming up; she will soon be old enough to take a hand at crimp or basset with me when I am kept at home by my languid affection, and to bear me company as I work down my visiting list. La! but she is coming up! You should have seen her the other day at the puppet-show. I thought a certain young buck was ogling me, though it hit me his eye was pointed a trifle high; and there behind my very shoulder stood Mistress Betty, taller than me, as I live, and old enough to ogle back! But where was I? Yes, if you married Winter you could come a-sailing to me now and again, bringing tea for me and tobacco for your father; and I say not but I would go with you myself to see the new world, so you will promise me a

bodyguard to keep off the wild men. Why do you not set a pretty snare for Lord Winter? With that sprightly face you could get him, and be a queen in the new world as well as a countess at home."
"He is too old," spoke Penelope, decidedly.

66
What? Old ? I am amazed at ye, ye hussy! 'Tis his hair has turned early; sorrow, they say, for his first wife, has aged his face. He is not old, most certainly, for an earl."
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He is too stern and solemn and sad for my mood. My husband, madam, must be handsome, and good-humored, and envied me madly by every she-thing claps eyes on him! He must be rich, beside, and I should say of an auburn favor, although " But before she could count off the further attributes indispensable in her choice of a husband, wheels and hoofs were heard in the street. Out-door noises came in on a stream of air; the flare of a link reddened the antechamber. The two ladies in mantles and muffs hurried from the chaplain's sight; a wave of cold and the clap of a door told him they were departed.
He stood a moment in the bright, empty room, vaguely suffering. He had heard the conversation with varying emotions: anger and pain at the disparagement of the absent one, shame for the speakers, and finally humiliation at the little consequence he was in this house, where they could speak before him as if he were not there. He had longed to withdraw, but been withheld by a foolish sensitiveness for the fair ladies, who deserved less; he had tarried, weakly fearful lest they be put out of countenance by the condemnation his withdrawal would imply.
He climbed now to his room, high in the house and well removed from the finer part where all was

great and gloomily splendid; but in the part he occupied, near the servants' quarters, cramped and plain enough..
When he had closed the door behind him, he felt his mood lighten a little at the promise of an evening such as seemed held to him in the faint glow shed over all by the sullen sea-coal fire. He sat down by this and fell into a muse, half melancholy, half sweet.
The house grew still; the fire died down, and the cold that crept in through the cracks of the casement began to prevail against it. Then, when the hour to go to bed had sounded, one would have thought, to every sense, he lighted candles, and far

from beginning to undress, made as if to set to work. He drew from the table-drawer papers old and new; he reviewed these slowly, with looks now of uncertainty, now of satisfaction. He set them aside at last, and laid before him a broad sheet, virgin of ink. He spread his arms over as much of the table as they would cover, his legs over as much of the floor, and sent roving into space an eye full of ecstatic light; now and then he uttered a sound like the breeze in the trees. His gaze became fixed and unseeing as that of a somnambulist; he felt for his quill, dipped it in ink, held it hovering a moment, then hesitated, - and instead of applying it to the clean foolscap, began nibbling at the bristling end of it. He moved the fingers of his left hand as if he had been playing on the virginal, all the while murmuring to

himself. At last he inscribed the page handsomely, and followed the dedication with a painstaking stanza; in time, another; then another.

He took no account of the hour, until a deadened bustle informed him the ladies were returning. He got him softly to a darkened landing from whence leaning over the stairs he saw moving lights below, heard faint voices. To these soon succeeded darkness, the report of doors closing in distant corridors, silence.

He returned to his slow versifying content. This piece, this panegyrick, he must finish before sleep. He hugged to his heart the reflection that while the object of his vigil slept, so proud, so beautiful, and unheedful of himself as if he had been a clod of earth at the other end of the world, -

- he was working in her name quite as if she had valued it, devoting to her the best hours of his night, the best conceits of his heart. Of course, of course, it was out of the question to obtrude his lucubrations on her sight; but on her birthday, could it be thought amiss he should celebrate her openly in an ode, to be laid beside her place at the breakfast table? He dreamed an effusion of such chaste excellence, its inspirer could not fail to distinguish her poet with a glance of esteem and gratitude.

The Muse prompted him not briskly to-night after the interruption; the poetic feet lagged, the rhymes suggesting themselves were trivial beyond a doubt; the images seemed to him to grow more and

more fantastic as he dwelt the longer on them. Nay, but it was absurd to consider bringing into a serious poem any jocular reference to My Lady's

wizened little monkey, or the quarrel between Gil-
lian and Moll, the kitchen-wenches, who had come
to him that morning with a case for nice judgment.
Now, curiously enough, Moll and Gillian, forgetting
their ground of grudge, seemed bending one over
each of his shoulders, overlooking his task, instruct-
ing him Heaven defend us! that prawn is an
-
excellent good word to couple in poetry with dawn.
He clapped a hand over the mouth of each saucy
temptress, beat them off into the cool dark empti-
ness, and with a sense of duty performed com-
posed himself to enjoy the peace following upon
their suppression.
He started with the thought that the room was
on fire, to open his eyes on the candles flaring for
need of the snuffers. The wicks bent over, each
overweighted by a large fiery fungus.
He rubbed his eyes; the room melted into the
accustomed room again. He shivered and sat up;
he shook himself, to clear his sluggish blood of the
oppression of night and cold and solitude.
Then his heart leaped and closed his throat. He
was not alone. On the opposite side of the table,
cut off from his drowsy eyes at first by the glamour
of the candles, sat a female, her head on her hand,
his verses under her eyes.
She looked up and pushed them from her when

he moved.
IN BATTLEREAGH HOUSE.
Amazement held him stupefied; he
blinked his eyes repeatedly, to make sure he was
awake, while his wondering heart beat thick.
this this seemed to him to be Berenice.
-
For
He stared. Undoubtedly, - undoubtedly, it was
she; but so changed from his last vision of her, so
declined from her accustomed state, as to almost
make it possible for him to waver on the question
of her identity. O where were the proud glance
and the triumphant bearing, the precise magnifi-
cence of appointment and the imperial effect?
Her figure drooped, her eye let divine a desperate
concern. She was in a loose furred garment, put
on disorderly and only half-fastened over the linen
under-robe; her hair, undone for the night, had been
caught up again, but with so hurried a hand that
long locks escaped the ivory teeth of the comb and
strayed over her neck. The pallor of her face was
enhanced by a daub of artificial red remaining fixed
on one cheek, while some chance had removed it
from the other.
She spoke at once. He experienced a shock: he
had hardly yet imagined possible this apparition
would speak; she spoke with the stiff quiet of a

great agitation mastered. He observed that her hands, laid one upon the other, wrought softly together as if each were doing the utmost insidiously to cripple its fellow.

"You are wondering what has brought me here," she said in a muffled tone that suited that dead hour of the night. "It is a service to beg. I can think

of no one but you. There is a thing that must be done! that must be done! I have cast about these long days, I can find no one else. Long I could think of no one at all; then my thought lighted on you, but I could not bring myself to it. To-night I could not sleep. I thought I should perish in my own chamber. I came forth to escape being maddened, and walked at random in the halls. I saw the gleam under your door. I peered through the keyhole, and, by God or a devil, I was inspired to enter."

His face now moving as if he were recovered enough to speak, she went on rapidly to hinder him, as if she had shrunk from hearing him express himself as yet, "One would think there were many, would one not, a good score and a half, no doubt, on whom I could lay a command, whatsoever it might be. There is not one! or it is plain I should not be found here. But you, you should not furbish your wit in elaborating these exquisite ecstasies," and she swept a finger across his manuscript, "You should not permit yourself to dog a person with your eyes in every movement, if you are not prepared, when the hour calls, to do more than restore a fan she drops."

Then the chaplain, wronged to this moment by his awe and the very fulness of his heart, found himself able to send forth jostling broken words at least enough to put her past all doubt that she could ask a thing in vain of him.

While, lifted on a great wave of feeling, he made

answer, she stared in the light, absently pinching the soft tallow of the candle; now and then she shook her head from side to side, and from the depths of a sorely burdened bosom, sighed. It was then he saw with a pang what the unkind women had meant. It was true she was grown thin and pale; pats denying that her face so noble! - showed a beginning of age, a weariness, a falling off from meridian beauty. But mortal years and chances could nothing prevail to diminish her in his mind; she seemed to him only more dearly dear. All his soul went humbly out in a desire to do her good where she sat there, looking gray and cold. With an increase of vehemence, he reiterated

his halting, husky protestations. In doubt, from her silence, whether she heard, he rang simple changes on these, till she should give some sign that their purpose penetrated.

A gradual change came over her face while he spoke; the tormented eyes that had told a struggle between pride and need, let the latter conquer a little. Her disdainful mouth confessed a weakness; in spite of itself it appealed for a moment instead of scorning, and betrayed to his astonished eyes an unimagined possibility of excessive womanish tenderness. She opened it softly to steal a breath, for it seemed unshed tears were choking her; the parted lips trembled. She pressed them impatiently together; at this, tears gushed from her eyes. With a fierce movement of self-contempt, she dashed them away and opened her eyes wide, to show

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them dry. Thereupon her whole face fell to quivering. There was a hurried catching of breath, a sound of suffocation; it seemed she must be about to dissolve as a very woman,

when he saw the beautiful hands on the table contract like claws, scarring the wood, and she burst instead into a volley of furious, incoherent words.

'I am a fool! - a fool but the rest are black wretches. Things are come to a fine pass in my father's house, when I when I

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And to think

Reptiles! But

that I should be afraid of them!

it is an accursed world! When need comes, you find that you can trust no one. Liars all! There is no question but that of the price offered! Oh! if I had but a brother! But a fever must carry mine off. My father, he would be for grand measures,

but if a breath of this comes to his ears, I shall wish to be buried, and there an end. Oh! if my mother had lived! Oh, if – But I must seek out strangers, forsooth," she said, turning as if with a sudden hatred toward him, that he was a witness to the torture of her pride, — "strangers, so obscure that I have no pride with them, and altogether such," she continued with a bitter frankness, her eyes flashing out her determination to retain the pride at least of defiant honesty, "that in selecting them for my distinguished confidence I have counted on their being, if not too simple to see their advantage, too mean to gain credit, shall they choose to betray me! Good heavens! forgive

you must see how it is," she concluded

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lamely, and turning suddenly even paler still, watched him with a sort of affright in her eyes.
"It does not matter to me wherefore I was sought," he said gently, for the first time quite composed and coherent; "I am grateful for the chance of serving."
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"You," she proceeded, in an anxious, generous manner, a confusion of haste to make amends, "you have the face of a good man. I have ob-
served you. We are all bad in this
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house, all bad! It is easy to distinguish you from among us. It is not because you are a man of God, mind you, I trust you; not by any means whatever. I have known men of your color. It is because from something in your face I judge you to be incapable of a baseness. And, in faith, I know not where to turn!"
"Confide in me without reserve," spoke the chaplain, his hurt made quite well; and piercing through the dignity investing him since he had something to forgive, an innocent eagerness, such as a page's on the hint of a quest from his Queen.
"It is but a little bundle, so large, I think there are not a dozen."
"C
- -
'Letters?" he inquired uncertainly, the sudden-born tact of the heart teaching him a tone empty of all surprise.
"I cannot get them back!" she burst forth, plaintive and indignant; "the wretch who received them will not return them. He will not destroy them. Last night I asked again, and with as con-

ciliating an air as I could bring myself to, an air that had no offence in it, I swear! He smiled in refusing so that had they been in his heart I would have cut them out with my own hands.
You think a man will scarcely make use of a woman's letters? But you have lived in the green woods, my friend! It is beyond a doubt this dastard will not stop at so little a thing. He implies the same, if I shall be discovered to favor a certain noble gentleman's suit - and, oh, Lord Winter I must marry! I cannot live longer like this. He will take me away, over leagues of the ocean, where all will be new, where no one will

know me.
I shall not be forced to see all these
faces I abhor, or to lead this terrible life. I am
worn out! I am in shreds! I grow so bitter from
day to day that my own heart will poison me. He
is the one possible man for me; he is kind and
serious; he will trouble me with no love, nor re-
quire any love of me Love! The thought of
I want no love of man ever in
You saw that cat, last evening,
What she did is but what all
soon will be doing. I cannot blind myself to it
henceforward the supremacy is passing from me.
I will go before the sceptre trembles too visibly in
my hand,—go in full dignity and be lost to report.
Ha! but I will disappoint them bravely, hissing
snakes that look to watch my process of fading, and
see how I stand being superseded! And shall that
petty villain baffle me in this? A curse on him!
it turns me sick!
this world again.
-that smiling cat?
:
-

78
IN BATTLEREAGH HOUSE.
-
-a curse! But, lack-a-day! he has me fast while
he holds those letters. Lord Winter is stern as he
is cold; his wife must be above all blame, all breathi
of scandal. Were he to suspect a past entangle-
ment, women of rank and character are plentiful !
he would take his leave with that same sweet
gravity he practises in courtship. And if he choose
to lie, that man with the letters can make believe
of me what he will, - - what he will! For they are
frankly loving; I tell you freely, I wrote from a
heart unusually stirred, and thereupon trustful and
blind. Doting fool! I lost sight for a season of
this truth, that all men are traitors, but Southlands
arch-traitor among them all!"
-
"Southlands!" exclaimed the chaplain, in an
accent of unconcealable surprise and grief.
66
Southlands!" she replied quickly, and proceeded
with a curious ferocity at the contempt for her
reprobate lover she seemed to suspect in his tone.
'By your expression, you wonder. He is a pro-
fessed rake, a perjurer, a depraved and dissolute
wretch. So he was then. But let the truth be
spoken of Southlands! Black as he is, let him
have justice! He is worth any three dozen of your
puling saints. He is a man, at least. Why, when
all is said, is he the conqueror ever, but that he
deserves to be? That eye of power, that voice of
persuasion, that accomplished conversation that
could win attention from

Tell me,
you have
an intellect: can a man be a famous breaker of
women's hearts, having but to choose whom he
if

-
shall be at pains to ensnare, and possess no merit
or charm whatever? What do you think of women?
You have not known Southlands! And me, you
have not known me, as I was once, mark you.
I could have no peace but I enslaved the one by
whom all were enslaved. I must tangle my fingers
in that lion's mane and govern with a merciless
hand him who made havoc in the sheep-fold. No
guileless, bleating sheep I! But a woman," and
her tense tone relaxed wearily, "with ever so little
heart, cannot hold or hurt a man without any heart
at all. It was my mistake to think I was the
greater monster! I was not. I held faithful awhile
a notorious inconstant; he won a show of favor from
the toast of the town. The pride of each might
have been satisfied; we should have parted smiling.
But by that time, miserable woman, I had caught
a disease of loving him, a horror of losing him;
whilst he, no more then than at any time would
he be chained to me or any woman, but take of
each all he can obtain of her passion or her good-
nature, and no loss of liberty to himself. Then I
made him smart with blows of the bitterest tongue
in town, they say; I caught up to wound him
whatever lay at hand. He endured my anger with
smiling insolence, feigning to have believed I un-
derstood him better, and to look for compensation
in a future day, the day of reason reinstated. The
common eye saw but a brief passage of gallantry
between us; it observed how this was followed in
me by scorn; but a virtuous woman's scorn of
-

Southlands causes no question. It looks on in-
different now at the barren courtesies exchanged
when chance brings us together; faith! it would
open wider did it suspect he is pleasing himself,
while we play that comedy of cold compliment,
with reminding me of my letters, which he affects
to treasure from a soft sentiment. The end of his
game is yet to play. It is no part of it I should
leave this country approved in an exalted marriage,
and be out of reach of his malice forever. It is a
way of requiting me my shrewish words, this show-
ing how great his toleration has been, that, holding
the means to ruin my good name, he has been deter-
mined to use it only in the last resort, when reduced
to that or to lose me completely. He referred to

his advantage last night, in vowing he hoped the rumor of Lord Winter's accepted attentions was ill-grounded. He spoke playfully, — with the playfulness of cat to mouse. Ah, those letters! those unhappy letters!"

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"But you shall have them back!" cried the chaplain; "for I, I will get them for you. I know not how it shall be contrived, but by devoting body and brain it must be that I can recover them. God shall help me.
Rest you secure!"
Berenice looked over at him with a wistful face that expressed a desire to have confidence, rather than confidence. She examined his face as if taking an inventory of his qualities as set forth in that simple map. She shook her head sceptically.
you could! Ah, but to call on God is not all I
If

have found out that for myself. Besides being prayerful, a man to get the end of his prayers need be strong and wary, far-seeing, capable, ingenious, daring. I doubt if you are all those. I very much doubt it. You scarcely look to me like such a man. I doubt I have addressed myself to the wrong individual. Yet, if you could! If you could! But, Lord ha' mercy, how can it be done? I am poor in counsel at this. I have thought through many hours of the night; but my mind in the darkness works out its schemes in a large wild pattern that by daylight appals me; for always finally Southlands lies there with a knife in his heart, and the letters are mine by murder. I cannot arrive at a dispassionate stratagem. Let me collect my thoughts, let me collect my thoughts. What were best to do now? Bribe a servant? but what danger in that! For we might by ill-luck hit upon a faithful one; or, at the best, who can be bought is ready to sell. Hire a ruffian? No, no, no, no, no. Introduce yourself secretly into his apartment, and search? But in that what difficulty! Oh, my poor wits' end! Oh, my poor head!"

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"Be comforted, madam. Think of nothing.
Leave all to me, and God helping, I shall not fail.
And yet, though, God helping, I mean not to fail, all is in His hands, and His designs are inscrutable. If it be His will I get not back these letters, I do beseech you, madam, prepare your soul for patience. I do beseech you. Why should the thought of
6

their being made public trouble you so mortally ?
They will bear inner witness to your innocence,
lie the villain as he may. Surely it is no dishonor
to a woman to have lavished a loving and tender
heart upon even so unworthy an object, and Lord
Winter, being a just man, will esteem you no less
for it."
-
"Hush!" she murmured wrathily. "You make
my blood boil. You know nothing of the heart.
Your blood is not as our blood, you cannot measure
me by yourself, no, my pride you cannot meas-
ure." She covered her face as if from the prying
world, and breathed through her hands: "It were
worse than death to me to have it known how I
doted, and that I was rejected like another. If I
get not the letters, I will dismiss Lord Winter, and
after that - after that I know not what!" she
-
-
ended, letting her hands drop unstrung in her lap.
"God grant me to get them! Oh, fear not, get
them I will!" said the chaplain, fervently, and his
fervor made contrast with her dejection. As she
saw the fast resolution shining in his face, a little
hope seemed to gain in her. "My God, I should
be alive again if you did!" she sighed.
She rose; and seemed suddenly to suspect the
disorder in her appearance. She lifted her hands to
her head, she looked down her ungirt figure. She
gave evidence of no confusion, but straightened her-
self proudly, and with a reassumption of her stately
graces of bearing and manner, moved to go.
66
Farewell. You are not familiar with my hand.

IN BATTLEREAGH HOUSE."
83
You shall have an example of it. You know where
Southlands lives; I know nothing nearer the posi-
tion of the letters than that. Come to me for all
means and enlightenment of any sort you may
require, but secretly, after communicating with me
by my tirewoman, who is faithful as she is dull.
She, besides yourself, is the only one who knows.
She was our messenger."
Before getting beyond the table, she laid one
hand lightly on the copy of verses. She spoke to
him with a changed voice, the shallow note of
worldly politeness. "They are very agreeable
lines. You have a pretty talent."
He blushed; he smiled in foolish beatitude.
Indeed, I mean it. You shall write for me
I know not what. An epithalamium perhaps, when
by your means I wed with Lord Winter!" And
with a hushed, mirthless, superficial small laugh
she turned to the door.
He followed with a light. When he had
reached the threshold, she waved him to come no

further. He gazed after her diminishing down the corridor to disappear at the stairway. Turning back into his room he saw a faint cold whiteness between the curtains. He scarcely knew if he were awake or dreamed. Coming to the table, he mechanically ran his eye over the verses, to feed himself with what in them had won her praise. The foolish, beatific smile lingered on his face. He could not understand one word. There was a great knocking at his heart, that grew no less as the

minutes passed. He took his head in his hands as if to make sure that it was there, and sinking into his chair, tried to think.

A week was not gone from the occasion of the care-ridden lady's night visit to the chaplain, when the tirewoman indicated by her as faithful was waked from her doze, where she sat waiting her mistress' return, by a subdued tapping at the door.

She opened discreetly, expecting to see one of the other maids come for a minute's gossip, or Mistress Berenice's little blackamoor bringing wine and cakes on a silver dish. She was startled to be met by a man in a long dark cloak, a stranger in the house, as she thought, until he whispered, "It is I, Mistress Pinner, Septimus Vangreve. Pray, let me come in."

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He passed her; she followed close on his heels, looking him over in open doubt.

When they were within, half repressing a child-ish laugh, he opened his cloak that she should see what it covered. She held up the light, and "The Lord bless us!" she murmured.

His coat was a fine snuff-brown satin trimmed with silver lace, his sword had a knot of blue, his hose were silk, his shoes boasted great buckles. He wore an impressive gray periwig, row upon row of rich crisp curls.

"How do you like me, Mistress Pinner?" he asked, turning obligingly for her to view.

"Lord! Mister Chaplain, I should not have known ye!"

"A brave suit, is it not, Mistress Pinner? I borrowed it of my uncle. Did ye know I had an uncle in town? the same that brought me to his Lordship's notice. But for that, I might have re-mained what ye would call a country bumpkin all my days. What do you think of my wig? I would have been better suited with a golden one, but must even be pleased with what I could get.

My uncle is for this color, being on in years. Sooth, I like this well, this silver fringe on my sword-knot. Do you not agree with me it is vastly fine? I shall be loath to go back to my magpie's garb, and have nothing on my head but my own hair, which Providence decreed should be straight as is not the way to heaven. These curls make a sightly show. Pinner, you are a good girl."
66
'Oh, no, sir!" protested the tirewoman, court-seying her thanks.
"You are, Pinner. I am astonished to find so many people so good, when I have had such difficulty myself to keep topmost in the battle with sin. Pinner, will your mistress not soon be home?"
"She cannot be long now, sir. I heard the watchman call out eleven."
"I must see her to-night, Pinner, not be displeased to see me, I say it —
and she will without fear.
Show me to her closet, good Pinner. I will wait for her there, and you please till she comes.
shall sleep by the fire if you
Then tell her I am here, and

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IN BATTLEREAGH HOUSE.
have to give into her hands certain papers. She will understand, and not be vexed with you for allowing me to wait."
"Mister Vangreve," said the woman, in a whisper, and her little caricature middle-aged face took on a dignity of anxious affection, "have you brought what will set the dear soul's heart at rest?
"
""
He clapped his hands where the breast of his waistcoat protruded more than natural, and smiled a beaming smile. Then, as if ashamed that he could find no voice to explain what melted his features to one bliss, he turned his face away; and when she saw it next it shone with tears, through which endured on the beaming smile, "God bless you!" cried the woman, brushing her sleeve across her eyes, -"I knew her when she was a little girl. She always loved Pinner. I have been a foolish woman ; but SO God spares me, shall not be caught fetching and carrying letters again, but I know the man. I will show you to her closet, sir."
—
He followed her as one treading on air. His sword, on the hilt of which he perpetually kept his hand, hit now against a cabinet, now a stool. He turned innocently to see what made this clatter.

Mrs. Pinner set the light on the mantletree for him, and lingered a moment in hope that he would talk further with her. He was looking about him, upward, downward, with a face of gentle awe. Seeing herself forgotten, she withdrew.

He clasped his hands behind him, that they should yield to no impulse to touch, and went from object to object with bated breath. These were books of hers, these little calfskin saffron-edged tomes, satires and plays and masques,— long romances, too: "Pedro and Elvira," "The Child of Valladolid," " Sintramona." This was her inkstand with the curious silver figures, the neat crow-quill at hand. That must be the likeness of her mother; a toast, too, in her day, poor dead beauty so stiffly painted; that pattern of upper lip, praise God! had survived her, so full-armed and so disarming, beautiful bent bow delicately hemming in the soft, ripe underlip. On this seat of striped silk, where one might sit or lie at will, she reclined no doubt of a morning while tradesfolk spread their wares. before her, pots from China, Persian silks, Italian airs. From this recess, when not choosing to show herself at the casement, she watched life in the street reflected in yon round mirror that gave back all diminished to the size of a toy. The whole interior was in it, dainty-small as a fairy's abode : the long panels of sad green damask framed in pale woodwork; the cloudy medallions of the ceiling and their dim gold settings; in the midst of all, strange to him as the rest, this puppet that was himself, this figure in satin and silver lace, with sword and wig, that might be mistaken for a courtier, a beau, a statesman, forsooth, — an ambassador, a governor!

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He turned from the mirror with the recollection

that pride is a sin. He walked from end to end of the room, his heart beating high. Now and again, as a man might pinch himself to make sure of being awake, he crushed against his breast the hidden packet.

A murmur, a moving in the next chamber. He stopped still: Pinner's voice and that other. A hurried step, an approaching rustle, and in the doorway stood Mistress Berenice in her fair silk gown, as she had come from the Play..

He had got the packet free at last. When they came so near to one another that he could give it in her hand, his legs weakened. He took their suggestion; he offered the packet kneeling. Berenice seized it from him with a small sob of joy, and holding it fast to her breast sank on a

seat, hiding her face against the back. Scarce knowing what he did, he took the edge of the seat beside her, and while she struggled with her emotion, softly wrung his hands, yet smiling all the time for pure gladness.

She looked up after a moment, unashamed of her wet eyes. The beautiful bow of her mouth unbent, like Cupid's arc at rest; the rose-red blood showed. all through her skin; the light warmed in her eyes. Whoso had said of her beauty that it was a fading thing, had been put to mortal shame.

"I do thank you!" she said to him. "Oh, I do thank you!" and held out her hand with such free graciousness that it seemed but proper to slip on one knee again, and lay lip to it, trembling.

She rose in a happy business, got the light and set it nearer, loosed the band that held the packet, so that a dozen letters dropped in her lap.

66

"They are all here!" she said, fingering them fondly, opening now one, now another, but no more than to glance at it, "all here!" She shut her hands on the papers suddenly with a mighty grip, as a superb huntress pouncing upon her quarry. 'How I can take aim freely now, and make him the mark of scorn without fear! Oh, the parts are changed! It is another story from this night forth. But, dear chaplain, what is this strange disguise?" she asked, taking definite account of him for the first time.

He blushed. "They are not my clothes. I thought best to attire myself so. It was part of my stratagem not to appear in my own proper character."

66

Very well. You shall tell me all. I am eager to hear how you achieved this miracle, for it seems no less. But first, hear me acknowledge my debt. Heaven knows I was distracted. You have given me back life, the dignity of life; and the gratitude of Berenice Battlereagh you shall command so long as she lives!"

A

At these words, spoken with a generous abandonment, a face that showed how sincerely they were meant, the chaplain felt a divine intoxication climbing to his brain; soft fumes blurred. and glorified past and future, a fine ecstasy tingled in his every nerve, a glamour fell upon all his sur-

roundings. Never was place more fit to be fixed in immortal verse than this dim-lit chamber; never sat woman so peerless beside undeserving mortal so happy. And she thanked him in never-to-be-

forgotten words!
The effect of his fully realizing that he, even he, had succeeded in an undertaking of greatest moment; the effect of her benign condescension to him; the effect of her dear proximity, in the rich gown of white, overrun with a green vine blossomed in purple and blue, the jewels of her necklet sparkling with the motions of her breathing, a distillation of Oriental roses exhaling from her dark hair,- was to fill his heart so full that life-long barriers of reticence were washed away, and he found himself as ready to pour forth words as if he had thought himself indeed such a hero as her gracious words. seemed to make him, and had had as good a title as any man in the world to sentiments, emotions, hopes, and the utterance of them.
"How could I have failed?" he said, fervently. "When I set forth, be sure I meant to leave my life rather than those letters you charged me to bring back. Can I speak of myself a little space, lady, and not weary your kindness? It is in my heart to tell you so many things, which, in truth, it seems to me your right to hear, insomuch as they make known to you your own rare worth.
I am a plain man, as you know well. The life that was mine until good fortune led me here would to some have seemed less a matter for re-

--
joicing than for sour reflection. For, in truth, it has been ever as if there were no right place in this world for me. My name is a mere numeral; I came late, when there were already too many, and derived it from a parent's wit or weariness. And when I was grown, my natural abilities were so few, and the acquirements I most inclined to so unavailable, poor qualities of elegant scribe, passable scholar, modest versifier, what could they do to promote the comfort or credit of a country home? I was treated like a child long after I had the heart of a man, I do assure you. At last my uncle, through chance or exertion, found for me the opening in this household. To the end of entering it, I took orders. But in all those days. gone before, was I unhappy? Nay, never wholly. I was consoled for living, by what, madam, but by the beauty of the rose, God bless her! the song of the nightingale, the radiance of the stars! In iny poverty, these belonged to me. As if they had been mine by birthright, I laid an instant claim to all things beautiful, to worship them with a passion void of all personal desire, possess them with my eyes, nurse the thought of them in my inmost heart, satisfy my soul with their perfection. I was content to be in a world where they were."
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Berenice had listened in some little wonder to this lyric outburst, and now looked at the rapt speaker. His cheek was flushed a delicate wine-color, his pupil was dilated, his dull daily gray eye

glowed. In talking he clasped and unclasped his hands.
She nodded to herself as if she had settled some point of doubt in her mind; her glance combined indulgence with impatience. She half smiled in amusement, half frowned in annoyance, and as he continued, turned slightly from him and unfolding one of the old love-letters ran her eyes over it, as if at the same time she listened and read.
"But lily, rose, star, and nightingale," he said, "nay, colors of the heavens, odors of the forest, rainbows, blossoms, beams, all that are so much to a soul athirst for beauty, what are they when human perfection shall have dawned upon the sight? Madam, I do humbly, humbly thank you. And just to have known that you were, seemed enough to me at first to fill my heart with gratitude to God, and enforce my faith that the world is a thing well-meant,- just to see you walk in complete beauty and worth, adorned with that nobleness we are scarcely accustomed to look for in creatures of this earth! But after, I confess, I could not make myself content; we are human, we crave ever more than we deserve! A vain desire ate at my heart, that my life. should at some point touch yours; that I might in some respect serve you, nay, give my life to serve the best and most beautiful I knew. Should I not be grateful to-night, then? Must you not excuse my copious words, laying them to a justly overflowing heart, when I have obtained for you a thing you value, and you have thanked me me!
a benefactor?"
-
as

"Good Mister Vangreve," spoke Berenice, and unobtrusively she gathered her skirts a little closer about her, and drew herself back so far as the seat would allow, "you will still further increase my gratitude to you now, if you will relate to me from point to point, and as barely as you can, how this was achieved, this recovery of my letters. You will no doubt have found some most ingenious expedient?"
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He laughed softly, with something of the glee of

a child. 'Ingenious I must think it was; more ingenious truly in the end, by a chance inspiration, than was I when I laid my plan of action. I thought, long I thought. I am not practised in the world's methods, and the difficulties in the way of getting the letters back by cunning seemed to my poor wit insuperable. I prayed fervently that a light might shine on me. Then it was I determined to go to Lord Southlands myself, and ask the letters of him frankly, with such arguments as I had, relying on the justice of these, and the common fact of our humanity, and the strength of God's right behind me."

Berenice caught her breath, her face full of retrospective fright. She reassured herself that the letters were in her possession, clutching them instinctively to her bosom. "You went to him, like that, and asked for them outright?"

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Septimus nodded, smiling. "I went, but as it has become plain to me that my garb — perhaps, I blush to think, for that I myself take from its dig-

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nity commands little respect- Yet 't is a pity, I will say it, madam, since you are so graciously listening, that one wearing the badge of God's service should be so lightly considered as seems customary in the great houses of the city. While he stands and asks a grace on the meat, all bend their heads; when he delivers the word of God, all bow them low, - by that token he should be more respected, I think, even when not in the act of discharging his holy office, than the menial who removes the dish. I am not venturing to complain for myself, it is for my calling! It has lain a little heavy on my heart, not that Septimus, but a wearer of the cloth should be, for instance, expected to retire from the table before the rest of the company, should be sent by My Lady to give her lap-dog the air. But why am I saying this, but that you give me such kind encouragement to speak? I meant to explain merely why you see me in this attire. I would not venture to approach Lord Southlands in my true shape of a chaplain, seeing that such a man is one of little authority. I thought best to meet him as a man of his own world. I borrowed these of my uncle who is a justice in this city. They do very well, I think."

"And what further? What further?"

"I went to his house. There was a company assembled. He sent to inquire my name. This I would not give, but said I had important business

with him. After sufficient parleying and obsti-
nate importunity on my part, for I would not be

refused, I was finally introduced where he awaited
ine."
"How was he disposed on this occasion? What
was his mood ? How looked he? Are you sure it
was himself?"
There
"I saw before me a marvellous well-favored man,
with light brown locks and a vivid blue eye, and
aught of biting in the smile. He wore a black
velvet suit, with white lace here and there.
was something vastly engaging in all his manner,
I thought, yet terrifying too,—at least, my heart
was ill at ease; I felt as if he could play me like
a fish at the end of a line."
"That was he,
but quickly."
without a doubt. Tell on,
-
"I felt foolish indeed before him, placed at an
incalculable disadvantage; but the right was on my
side, God must be for me. I asked for the letters
boldly, as one with a good title to have them."
"6
-
'What said Southlands?"
-
"Nay, I forget the words. They were playful,
as I remember, and negative, and he toyed with a
bronze trifle on the table. I grew more earnest
and insistent, I spoke much, in spite of the words
sticking on my tongue. Alas! I have no art of
speech like his! He became somewhat incensed,
and was on the verge, I feared, of calling me out to
fight with swords for what he termed my imperti-
nènce. Now though I wore a sword, I cannot fight,
as you know. It is not only that I never acquired
the art, but to shed blood is so great a sin, a man

who would follow in his Saviour's footsteps must
sooner die than be guilty of it. I conciliated him
the best I could by my humility, and restored him
to a smiling mood. He was eager to be gone back
to his company, yet unwilling, I believe, to use open
discourtesy to one coming to him from you—
"No, that he would still not do!"
-
-
"9
"I had not given him my name, but conveyed
that I came with a good right; so he may have
thought me a relative, a cousin, or an uncle, per-
haps, I look so settled in this sober wig. Now ris-

ing to be rid of me, he repeated conclusively that
the letters remained his; he added with a light,
short laugh he would give them up to no one, -
no one, mind you, but Lord Winter, should he in
person come to ask for them! He spoke in jest,
but I felt all my blood leap up into my head, a
bold thought flashed through my brain, I think
it came from above! I said to Lord Southlands,
'The name you have just spoken is mine. I am
Lord Winter.'
"You said
-
-
- you -
were
- Lord-Winter ?"
"That I did!" replied Septimus with open pride.
"Never in my life did so many pertinent thoughts
pass through my brain in such lightning succession.
I felt assured the two gentlemen had not met, Lord
Winter being, as I have heard, of a sad temper,
besides unhappily affected by this climate, and going
abroad but little. I knew further that while I wear
this periwig I might be taken for a man of his
years-
""

IN BATTLEREAGH HOUSE.
97
"What said Southlands then? What said he,
man?"
"<
'He looked me in the eye a moment. I made
my face brazen, my glance firm, hoping God would.
forgive me so great a lie. I felt that all was to be
lost or won upon that cast. It must arise from a
truthful daily habit that a face shall gain credit
even when it nowise deserves it; for after a long
minute of our looking one another in the eye, he
cast back his head, did my young Lord Southlands,
and laughed aloud, saying, 'I will keep my word,
Lord Winter. The letters you shall have, and
believe me, they are pretty reading!'"
"He laughed? he said that? Ah!"
"He went to a high black and white cabinet
that stood against the wall, and felt for a secret
panel that I never should have found had I had
good leisure to search a month; he took from a re-
cess impossible to suspect the letters which he gave
into my hands. I thought my joy would over-
whelm me, but continued in a stiff deportment, and
buttoned them safe in my bosom at once.
I would
have come away then, but
"What hindered you?"
—
""
"He pressed me to stay so urgently that, in
faith, though I would have refused, I knew not

how to do it. It is impossible to be more civil,
a man cannot defend himself against such civility!
I followed him into the supper-room
"Who were there?
""
"Four or five, unknown to me. One very
7

young, in a peach-blossom coat, with a face like a
woman's and a lisping weakness in his speech. He
laughed much, without reason that I saw, and
talked in a throaty treble. He looked me up and
down through a perspective glass -"
"St. Clair,
scandal-monger and fop!"
-
Yes, they called him so, St. Clair. Another
was of a mighty sanguine favor, who spoke with
jocular oaths and drank with a great thirst. He
had hung his periwig on the back of a chair, for the
heat, yet looked not much amiss, his head was so
admirable a shape, though crossed by a great scar.
He might be a soldier, I thought."
"March, braggart and sot!"
-
"I caught not his name. Another was an oldish
man in a coal-black youthful wig, finer dressed than
the others, in a rich crimson velvet with gold; on
his wrinkled hand he wore a great seal, his breast
was covered with jewelled orders. Brentontowers, I
think they called him."
"No doubt. No doubt Southlands is devoted
friends with him as well as with My Lady his
wife. And what did you in the supper-room, may
one hear?"
"Lord Southlands presented me to his friends as
Lord Winter, lately arrived from the New World,
- fit to instruct them in the manners and customs
of that country ·
-
Berenice uttered an indescribable sound and
caught her clasped hands between her knees. He

looked at her dubiously; the patches of artificial
red stood out curiously crude on her cheeks.
"Go on," she said. "What did you do? What
did you say
<<
?"
'Lord Southlands made me take a seat beside
him. A thousand pities that a man so amiable,
so remarkable, indeed, for grace of address, come-
liness of feature, nay, strength of intellect, too,
good sense in all his utterances, should be of so
evil a life!"

"Leave out that!" exclaimed Berenice, tapping her foot. "Tell me what you said yourself, what Southlands said."

"I can hardly remember word for word. But it was all very pleasant talk. He has a delicate, quick wit. I was so full of joy at the issue of my quest-I could feel the packet against me at every breath I took I was inclined to be vastly happy. Lord Southlands filled my glass and insisted I should drink. I take but little wine, yet would not offend him by saying him nay. Rarely have I been in such pleasant company. They asked me many questions of the New World, and this, and that. My invention was quickened by necessity; now I eluded them, now I answered with grave assurance, though knowing nothing of the subject I spoke on. I think my humorous vein must have been opened, for they laughed at many of my answers. In truth, a pleasant company!"

"Did you" asked Berenice, darkly, "when the supper was near its end, feel a large kindliness

flowing through all your veins with the warming of the wine; and did you then speak, perhaps, the praises of virtue, as a man of your cloth has sometimes been heard to do, or the beauties of Nature and poetry, lambs and brooks and daisies?"

"N-nay. I did speak, though, - but not tediiously, I hope, of day breaking over the heath as I have delighted to see it, and — but passingly only of the brotherhood of man."

"Nothing was wanting but that! And and what was the end of this fine comedy?"

"This this comedy? Of course; I played a part! I was afraid of betraying myself if I stayed longer; I pleaded an engagement. Lord Southlands did me every honor. When I rose to go, he rose with me to accompany me to the door, and there presented me to the company anew, as the future husband of one whom they had all ever admired, Mistress Berenice Battlereagh —"

Berenice started to her feet, clasping her head wildly.

"Is it enough humiliation?" she burst forth, as if her heart could repress no more. "Have I suffered enough?" She ground her face into her hands, and started to move about the room in the utmost disorder and agitation. The letters, dropped from her lap, were scattered on the floor.

The chaplain looked at her in amazement.

She stopped before him suddenly and took her

hands from her blazing face.
"So he took your
word that you were Lord Winter!
And you

avoided to fight him; you showed a disrelish to
crossing steel, forsooth! And you drank scantily,
like a country parson, yet waxed silly at that.
And he had you before his friends, -this curiosity
from the New World! this ingenuous production of
a young civilization! And he mocked you, and
and you never knew it!"
- -
-
"No! No! He did not mock me!" said
Septimus astounded. "I do assure you, I do
assure you."
<<
-
Who should know Southlands better, you or
I? He mocked you, I say. Would he have given
you the letters, had you not been as you are?
He thought himself sufficiently avenged-d'ye
see? that after having withdrawn myself from
him I should be served with such a one! A good
jest it was! A precious jest! To give up the let-
ters into your hands, -as good as bidding you
read them, saying they made a pleasing literature!
But have you seen Lord Winter? Do you know
what he is? A noble great man - with a mien
that inspires respect to the verge of awe, — a man-
ner like a quiet king's. And should Southlands
challenge him, he would likely die for it, would
Southlands. And he thinks - Southlands thinks
-
-
and all that low crew of his think- Would God
the letters were back in their hiding-place a thou-
sand times! Would God I had sent a knave to
do my errand, sooner than a fool!"
With Septimus it was as with a poor man who
in dream has felt all the gladness of being a crowned

king, and waking finds himself not in the accus-
tomed garret, but a place far worse, to which he has
been conveyed in sleep,—a dungeon cold and full
of horror. He strains his eyes, he looks about in
woe and amazement. He cannot place himself,
he cannot believe but that this is part of another
dream.
He stood fumbling at his silver lace, following
her with unintelligent eyes.
She moved hither and thither as one trying to
deal with intolerable physical pain. She stopped
now and then to utter an angry exclamation, less

to him than to herself.
-
- -
His one shuddering desire was to take this person that inspired such contempt in her out of her sight, — go hide. He stole to the door. Turning his eye for a swift last glance at her, he caught sight in the mirror of the great pretentious wig. He ducked his head with a cringing motion, and hurried himself off.
She said no word to detain him, occupied in treading down her passion.
He stopped a moment at the door, and looked uncertainly back. At his hemming to clear his throat, she glanced where he stood with an anxious sad face. He pointed to the letters. "You have got back the letters," he said shakily; "do look to them that they be safe," and was gone.
--
At dinner the next day appeared Berenice somewhat late, from having been kept, as was known to

the other members of her family, by a ceremonious visit from Lord Winter.
The expression of her face as she took her seat at her father's right hand, though somewhat cold and distant as usual, yet was whimsically tinged with amusement.
"Well," spoke Lady Battlereagh, "have you no news for us?"
66
Nay, none, madam," she replied, "but that I am to marry Lord Winter one day next month. And, if it please you, should it continue mild and fair, he will come anon to escort us to the Park."
While comments in various keys were being made on this announcement, Berenice paying little attention to them stole a glance toward the end of the table in the direction of Major Fitzwilliams, her father's kinsman and dependant, and Madame de Cadours, Penelope's friend and instructress in several arts. These two sat elbow to elbow; on other days they had been separated by a third person.
"Where is Mr. Vangreve?" she asked at last with a somewhat blank face.
Her father answered her: "It is not entirely clear to myself why he is absent. I had a letter from him an hour ago, headed from an inn I never heard of in my life, the Knight-and-Dragon; know ye of such a place, Fitzwilliams?-in Sheep-lane. He begs me to excuse him from attendance these coming few days, and pleads an accident which he details not. I hear he did not sleep in the house

last night. I wish to think no ill of him, indeed, I wish to believe no ill."
Berenice had risen to her feet as if in sudden fright and foreboding.
"Are you ill?" asked Lady Battlereagh. "What ails the girl? Look at her color."
—
"I am not ill," answered Berenice; "I hardly know It was a sharp pain here." And letting escape her breath audibly, she took her seat again, and went on to eat and drink.
"I will send to Sheep-lane," said Lady Battle-reagh, "to see if he be there, and what he is doing. We can do without prayers a time, and Fitzwilliams can get done all the writing that fell to the chap-lain, can you not, Fitzwilliams? You have noth-ing else to do, you know. Would ye play at checkers all day in the housekeeper's room? If he be ill, of course, it is well; if he have been taken ill in the street, for instance, and carried into the nearest house. But what should he be doing in Sheep-lane? I do not like Sheep-lane. He will have to make matters very clear."
Mistress Pinner slipped forth in search of Sheep-lane. From the hostess of a certain darkling, cramped little inn, bearing on the tree in front a sign gayly painted with a scaly monster at odds with a scaly man-of-arms, she learned that a gentle-man indeed lay ill in her house with a fever. He had wanted no surgeon. He had come to her in a sorry condition, as she had seen gentlemen before who had taken a hand in a street-brawl. He, how-

ever, could scarcely have been so belabored but by some mistake, being a man of gentle appearance, besides, unless his clothes deceived her, one of the clergy. She doubted not he would soon be well, if he did not continue to refuse both meat and drink.
Several days Septimus had lain in a narrow bed over the Knight-and-Dragon taproom.
His bruises had ceased paining him, his scratches were near healed, his bones ached none at all, nor did his head; and yet he arose not. He had no desire to stir, but rather an aversion to the thought of lifting if but a finger to help himself from bed. The pride of life was quite gone out of him.
He lay feverish and drowsy, with no plan for action henceforth; like a hunted hurt animal in hiding, with no hope but the humble one to be let alone.
When certain memories pressed on him, he rolled his head from side to side as if to make it swim until they vanished; and the expression of sickness on his face as he did this would have surely got him pity, had there been any one to behold it.
All day it rained softly, and every day; and the fog plastered its dismal face against the single small

window, darkened further by the tree outside, on which hung the creaking sign.
Through the lane now and then passed sheep, — bleating, bleating, -on their way, Lord God! to the shambles. He heard them huddling by with hurried little hoofs, the dog barking after them.

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IN BATTLEREAGH HOUSE.
The shepherd shouted; a stick glanced against the street-wall. Septimus shivered, and with a tightness at his throat hid his head in the clothes.
At night, the noises below increased in volume and variety some one sang; there was a dog-fight; a passing fiddler was called in. The ailing lodger would have no light; he tried to sleep.
66
When the hostess or the maid came to see how he fared, to bring his broth and straighten his bolster, he spoke not with them but to answer Yes" or “No,” and looked reproachfully when they rallied him that he would not eat sufficient. He pushed away the food and turned from it, not perversely, but as if those urging it on him had unknowing been doing him a wrong.
-
At last, one morning, it may have been the fourth or fifth of this lethargy, he awoke to find a sunny beam struggling through the tree that had great swollen buds on it,- for now was April, a faint, watery, copper-rosy beam, coming from such a sun as he knew, - that sweet unradiant pink sun of the early year, blushing through vapor. It called up a remembrance of misty tender green meadows. Ah, the world would go on, — lovely still, always lovely! but never the same to him. He shut it out with quivering lids.
-
-
A wench sang, plying her mop in the gallery that ran three sides of the inner court. The sunbeam strengthened; there lay at last a bright golden lozenge on the wooden floor, divided up into smaller lozenges by the shadow window-frame, cut aslant by

IN BATTLEREAGH HOUSE.
107
the pencilled shadow-twigs. It brought all the little chamber better in sight: his coverlet was of wadded green silk, worn now, but once indifferent fine; there was a bit of drugget on the dark floor; two great candlesticks stood on the table,—not silver, but shining gray, too. On the chair with the shield-shaped back, there, lay his chaplain things, that he had resumed to seek Southlands and confess the truth; when Southlands, he not being one who could give satisfaction by arms, had had him thrust into the street by his domestics, most ignominiously, in truth, — most ignominiously.

He closed his eyes; his mouth soured; he clinched his fists, and stiffened his body helplessly. There was a noise outside the door: that woman, to trouble him again. If he seemed to sleep, she would set whatever she was bringing on the chair by his head.
She entered; he lay still, with eyes shut.
There was a whispering; some one came to his bedside. A fragrance that quickened memory to a poignant thing crept to his brain; his heart turned over; his eyes opened of themselves.
"Are you so ill?" asked Berenice Battlereagh, in a soft sick-room voice. "Is it a trouble to see me? Shall I go, and come again?"
And it was she, with the outside morning air in her clothes, the ruddiness of the sharp spring wind on her cheek, and her hair a little blown. She had her great fresh swan muff, her soft tippet of lynx. Near the door stood Mistress Pinner with a basket

and flowers,
real violets and primroses, that must have grown in sheltered nooks.
He shut his eyes again, pale, and lay straight in his bed, with his hands stiff along him on the green coverlet, as if he had been dead.
66
He felt his clammy, ice-cold hand taken in her two warm hands. No, no, no, no," she said, in a running murmur, that capacity for tenderness once merely suspected in her proving itself now by her voice and touch. "Be of good cheer. I think you are not so ill.
All is quite
changed. It behooves you to be well again at once. Do you hear what I say?'
And all is well.
""
He moved his head ever so slightly, without unsealing his eyes, such was the agony of shame overwhelming him.
"There is one more ill at this hour than your-self," she said, dropping her voice to a hushed and solemn tone, he listened keenly, "and that is Southlands."
-
-
-
Then he opened his eyes wide. He saw her proud face, her delicate nostril spread as in her dangerous moods, her dark eye flashing.
—
"He got the distemper that is troubling him at Lord Winter's hands; an excellently dealt wound,
- so, in the breast, from which he will recover, they say; but all his life, when a storm is brewing, he will be reminded still, I think, of me! When I

found his insult to you, I had an apprehension
of it from certain words of his to me in the Park,
where I walked in Lord Winter's company, and he
——

accosted us. Pinner, good beagle, familiar with his
folks, discovered the rest. Coward coward! that
outrage to you, you, simple, honest, high-hearted,
unoffending man; kindly gentleman among gentle-
men, better than all we! You, exposing yourself
so generously in my cause! Straight went I to
Lord Winter, told him all, and bade him challenge
Southlands openly, instantly, for the injury done
you, or lose me forever. And he preferred to
keep me, and to kill Southlands. And my name,
my name that I was so careful of? To the wind!
Every one knows that they fought on my account;
it is the common talk of town that I, like a score
of others, had my day of loving Southlands, and
that he treated me a little worse than the rest.
But he pays for it,- he pays for it! He has more
fever than you at this point, I surmise, and a bad
dream or two, I will vouch, when his wound.
aches
-
""
Her breath came fast and uneven; while it was
steadying, she took the seat by his head. A flock
of sheep had entered the lane. She turned her
head quickly to listen; as the approaching murmur
took a definite character, resolved itself into quick
plodding of hoofs, a low bleat answering a high
one, the dog's authoritative yap, one would have
known that, though still appearing to listen, she
heard not. The excitement faded from her face;
an inscrutable sadness took its place, while her eyes
seemed fixed on some far-off thing, seen in her
mind only.

The flock had passed. There was a silence, dis-
turbed at intervals by the creaking of Pinner, who
tiptoed about, looking for a mug and water to put
her flowers in.
Berenice stared at the little window-square, and
Septimus from his pillow at her.
"I shall so soon be out of it all," she said at last,
pensively. "In less than a month I shall be on the
broad blue water, no land in sight on any side.
I shall have cut loose from it all; and when I reach
the further shore, I will burn the ship behind me.
A new world! Perhaps in it I shall find a new
Berenice Battlereagh,
-
one who
Ah, what profits it to speak?"

-
one who-
He had turned to the wall, and pushed his face
in the pillow.
66
—
Oh!" she said, seeing it; and with that curious
change from self-possessed and proud to tremulously
kind that surprised one in her when confronted
with a form of misery or weakness she was inca-
pable of feeling herself, she rose and bent over to
see his face, which he covered. "You are weeping.
Because I am going away, is it? But you -
you though I forget all, you I will not forget.
And you will have something more from me at last,
to remember me by, than humiliation and pain.
Lord Winter has promised- The living is in his
gift. It is in the country, better for you, poor poet,
than the murky, iniquitous town. The house you
will have is ivy all over, and birds in the ivy. I
have seen it, and walked in the garden, — a garden
-

IN BATTLEREAGH HOUSE.
111
with trees cut in the shapes of doves, with a flower-
dial, a bank of lilies against the red south wall. It
will seem to you like home returned to. There
you will be happy, and record the lovely changes of
the year in poetry, teach the simple to be good,
the poor to prosper. Look at me! Why do you
weep?"
"I have you back!" he got out audibly through
that weakness of tears; and as he parted his hands.
in obedience, to look at her, she saw that without a
doubt they were tears of comfort he shed. "Though
you go, I have you back!"

POWERS OF DARKNESS.

THE
POWERS OF DARKNESS.
HE church was cold and dark; the devout were
few. Before the lips of each hung a wreath
of mist constantly dissolving upward, as if the
prayers had taken a visible form. The walls were
stone, the pavement stone; at brief intervals and
from random points came a raw cough, a wheeze,
breaking across the pastor's voice. While the
Lenten service progressed, the dull gray day grew
slowly beyond the windows; the light above the
reading-desk paled; a wet brown track glistened
down the middle aisle.
-
-
The pastor,

he was young, with a delicate
severe face like that of an emaciated, half-frozen
seraph, strayed among men and kept from sleep
by their sins, having delivered the words allotted
him in the tone of fixed fervor of a thousandth
repetition, listened for the responses with an ear
gratified to catch an accent of veritable piety in
certain one of the replying voices. It stood out
against the rest as the note of a bird against the
summer drone of insects. It warmed his chilled
heart here seemed a fruit at last of long zeal in
struggle with his people. It rekindled his own

He
faith, at its lowest on this lifeless, sad morning. He
sought to distinguish from whom it came.
passed in review the hunched bundles of dark
clothing dotting the nave; such faces as were lifted
looked earthy enough. He declaimed the verse
falling to him. Over the surging answer rose
singly again the voice of the passionate faithful.
He had fixed, he thought, upon the utterer.
She stood last in a row of seats, and nearest to
the wall; a little more of the light seemed to find
her than the others. Her attitude accorded with
her voice; she stood exaltedly erect, with hands
clasped on the back of the seat before her. She was
in black; her face made a patch of cold white; the
only spot of color about her was so much of smooth
red hair as showed under the rim of her bonnet.
He knew the woman well,-one Mary Lindsay.
She never missed early service; they had had
occasional intercourse. He had not recognized her
voice; commonly it was merged in the general
mumble. Had he been mistaken? He listened
for her especially. Again her voice came to him,
clear and penetrating, fervid as a flame entertained
by an unflagging breath, with a quiver as of soaring
wings. There was no doubt who spoke. What,
then, had so uplifted her on this day more than
usual? For the grace of God dwelt with her
always; she was a saintly girl, lately converter of
many, the whitest sheep in his flock.
-
He was hardly surprised — when, service done,
the congregation had dispersed, all but half a dozen

that lingered in the porch, pinning up skirts, spread-
ing umbrellas to be accosted as he came down
the chancel-steps by this same Mary Lindsay.
-
-
The light had stopped growing long before it was
full daylight; when the day's eyes were wide open,
they were no better than half blind. He questioned

her face in the gloom; it showed the same difference from ordinary days as lay between her every-day voice and the voice that had awakened his interest. There was something curiously alive in it, yet fixed, as if she had reached some highest pinnacle, where was only room for one, and, conscious of seeing more than any other could see, stood absorbed in the vision. A curious face: common features made uncommon by their expression. Her eyes, without visible eyebrows or lashes, were light and large, the larger for the delicate gauntness of her whole person; their lids were reddened by close application or want of sleep. Her cheeks were colorless but for the sprinkling of rusty spots that accorded with her red hair; her nose and chin were just saved by youth from being disagreeably bony. Her mouth seemed a contradiction: the lips were full and brilliantly red; by a constant habit, she drew them in and flattened, seeming to deny them.

The young parson could not know it, nor could she; but a third person might have perceived between the two a resemblance: they had something the same unhuman light in the eye; the same ascetic aspiration had pinched and grayed them.

"Well, Mary?" he said.

She brought a little bundle from under her black shawl, a flannel bag drawn together at the mouth by a bit of string; it clinked as she handled it. She held it toward him. "For the mission," she said, "among the heathen blacks—"

"You - you have found possible to save so much?" he asked in wonder, unconsciously weighing the little bag in the hollow of his hand. She colored faintly with satisfaction. "And you have nothing but what you earn by sewing, which is just enough to keep a woman half alive! And in going about as you do, among the poorest and the sick, I know you must often find occasions when it is impossible not to spend. What an example to the rich are you, Mary Lindsay!"

She colored deeper under the tribute of his gaze. "It was not much, in truth, not much to do! I need so little myself, I live on bread. And the sick, the poor I visit, I give them the word from the Book. I read them the law and the promise and the threat. I try to feed their souls. Their bodies must perish, spite of all; it would be more awful far that their souls should perish alike. The money I keep to save souls, to make greater for Him His flock and the number of them that praise Him."

"A reward surely will be yours for your coura-

geous self-denial, Mary, for your unexampled zeal. This is most unexpected, most meritorious"
"Should you think," she said doubtfully, yet

irrepressible, through the humility of her voice pierced the pride of her praised achievement, "that what is contained there could be accounted as the price of one soul? Might it not be more? Could it be less? I should like to think it bought at least one soul from hell and to the glory of God. Can one tell ?"
The pastor shook his head. "One can make no computation. Your offering will do good sent in that channel; have no fear. It is much needed there, among the poor creatures of the night, that worship beasts and stones. But you do good besides at home, you have saved one sure soul that I know of. Mother Wilder, that vilest among sinners, would hardly have sent for me on her deathbed had it not been that you had roused her spirit from its mortal torpor, made her know that she had a soul to save
-
-
""
_
"I pictured hell to her, she screamed with fright; then heaven, and she shed tears, bidding me call you. She was afraid never to get back a little girl she lost long ago."
"Was there not watching with you, on that night of the woman's death, another younger woman? How to describe her? She was, as I remember, of an agreeable appearance, with an abundance of bright hair. What is become of her? I passed a woman in the street this morning that I thought for a moment was she; then I thought I had been mistaken. If it were she, she is altered much for the worse."

66 'Did you meet her not far from the church door? Had she an old red ribbon in her bonnet, and was her gown mud to the knees? That was herself. She was an orphan and a sewing-girl like me; we worked in the same house. The mistress turned her out. She stopped me, to beg, as I was on my way here this day, the same, no doubt, as you. I had nothing for her till she should mend her ways."
"Ah, it is a pity she should have turned out badly. She had a sweet face. Where does she live?"
'I don't know. 'Tis best to leave her alone till she comes to her right senses.
will not suffer herself to be

sinner."
She is one of those
striven with as a
"God help her!-I have many duties, Mary. I
must not loiter."
"I too must go.'
""
"God preserve you in faith and charity, and
make your donation a blessing to those for whose
good it is meant.”
They parted. Mary, coming out into the raw
morning air, hugged her shawl about her narrow
shoulders, and hurried along. Her face shone, rapt
and serene, breathing a pride of passionate purity,
giving token of the long hours her spirit spent in
a high company. She walked quickly, not feeling
the cold, not seeing the dismalness of things, not
repining at the killing labor she hurried toward.
What matter? She felt as if her foot at last had

been set on a rung, if even the lowest, of the heavenly
ladder.
66
Mary, dearie, do listen to me!" came a beg-
ging voice, interrupting her devotional medita-
tions; and a girl with a dingy cherry ribbon in her
bonnet caught up with her, and laid a hand upon
her arm.
What? In such a moment?
Mary shrank away from the touch as if she had
been clothed in spotless white, and the hand had
had on it as much wet mud as had the poor crea-
ture's gown. A flame swept over her righteous
face. "Abomination!" escaped her under breath;
and after a single glance downward from the red
ribbon to the broken shoes, she raised her head as
if from the stench of the nether pit, and passed
on.
The flush of her just wrath died slowly in her
face. With the rose-color in her cheeks, she looked
so much less austere that an undiscriminating
young workman who loafed against a tavern-corner
addressed her as his beauty and his dear.
She mended her pace, and was soon out of his
sight.
A few minutes later, in passing a broad sheet of
glass, she stopped as if by mechanism, and looked
in it was the show window of a purveyor of
mourning; all the wares displayed were black.
The glass reflected her as a mirror. She turned
away after a second, and looked about her with a
curious startled expression, holding one hand

against her temple, as if she had been trying to
remember something, or else to explain.

Now she was in the long room with the many windows, the many breathings, where needles and thread made a similar noise to breathing. Her seam was pinned to her knee, her sleek red head bent over it.

Some of the girls stopped to yawn, to stretch, to whisper with a companion, breaking now and then into an audible titter, quickly stifled. Never Mary. It was no wonder the mistress, when an important patroness was to be waited on, called Mary to assist her. She was a credit to the establishment, meek and tidy as she was, respectful and competent.

She stood by with downcast eyes, offering pins and scissors as they were wanted. The lady was in a vast good-humor with herself; she turned from side to side in her unfinished silk, admired how trim the fit made her waist appear. Of a sudden, while the mistress knelt, measuring the depth of the hem, the sewing-girl uttered an exclamation. The madam stopped in her pinning to turn inquiringly. Mary looked at her in confusion, and put her hand to her throat. "I did not speak," she faltered; "I — I cleared my throat."

-

Later in that day, Mary's neighbor, seeing Mary lift her face from her work, as she was not accustomed to do, and look fixedly ahead as if she listened, whispered socially, "What is it? Did you hear a noise in the street?"

Mary turned quickly toward her with a tinge of dislike in her glance, "Why should I not look up a moment to rest my eyes, but you must pry ?"

The darkness came early; the girls sewed long by lamplight. At last they were allowed to put away their work and depart.

—

Mary Lindsay stopped on her way home to buy a little loaf. She climbed to her attic, a bare, clean place, furnished with hardly more than a prison-cell would contain. The grate was empty and cold. Having eaten, and drunk from the water-jug, she opened a large Bible, a prize for good behavior, with the name of the charitable institution that bestowed it inside the cover, and, setting the candle on the table beside it, got on her knees to read and pray.

-

Gradually she regained something of the exalted feeling that had possessed her when she left the church that morning, the feeling of ideal attained. She began declaiming the psalms aloud, to impress herself more, inspire herself to rise to still further and further heights of abnegation and rigor and purity.

She did not hear a soft tap-tapping at the door,

nor yet the louder knock following it. The first she heard, was the door scraping against the threshold. She turned without rising. A head in a black bonnet, with a knot of cherry ribbon set in the front, was thrust in. As Mary made no motion, nor spoke, the shoulders presently followed the head.

<<
Mary, dearie, don't send me away!" appealed a timid disarming voice; "I want to speak with you. I won't trouble you much, - truly."
The woman was quite inside; she pushed to the door behind her, referring to Mary with her eyes while she did it. She was conspicuous for an untidy lot of chestnut hair; she had a worn young face, recently pretty, now too hollow and dragged for beauty, but preserving a curious refinement of line that hardly accorded with her condition. Her eyes were reddened and swollen with a trouble weakly borne, and looked ready to begin weeping afresh at a word.
Mary had risen. She pointed at the girl's shawl where it clearly covered a bundle. "What is that?" she asked.
"Don't be angry; don't now! I thought-I wanted I meant truly, truly
-
-
-
""
It is he!
she ended helplessly, and uncovered a little, little being, a child of few weeks, which slept.
"You brazen baggage!" exclaimed Mary, in a fine indignation, "why do you bring him to me, to show! As if he were a matter for pride
"C
""
'No, no; it is not that. I could n't leave him. I had not the face to ask a neighbor again so soon. I have bothered one and another so often. And I felt I must come. I can't let you despise me so much. We used to be friends. I looked up to you so! You can hardly think how I used to look up to you!"
"6
Jenny Gray, what do you want with me now?

Our ways divided long ago, when you turned to folly'
""
— -
"Mary, dearie, I want you to listen to me. But I won't pretend that is all was in my mind in

coming. I wanted you to help me, too.
You are
good to the poor, I am poor, Lord knows! But,
first, to hear me is what I wanted you to do. It
breaks my heart to have you look down on me so
And we brought up together, old friends! May I
lay him on the bed just for a moment?"
"No!" cried Mary, with a horror to the other
incomprehensible, and looked at the little thing as if
he had been a spider. "Put him down there, if you
won't hold him."
It was the coal-hod, empty and clean. Jenny
placed him in it, with her shawl under and all
about him; she stole a shamefaced glance through
her eyelashes while doing it, as if afraid of an
objection to her making him comfortable. "Poor
lamb!" she murmured.
Rising, she let her tired arms hang.
Mary stood and waited, watching her without a
word.
Jenny covered her face with a little gulp, but
before she had fallen to violent weeping, controlled
herself, took her hands from her reddened eyes, and
after a vague glance toward the two chairs, remem-
bered herself, and sank on the floor beside the coal-
hod.
At that, Mary, after a moment's hesitation, took a
seat, still not speaking.

"C
Is
'Oh, Mary, do help me!" pleaded Jenny, rolling
her luckless brown head against the wall. “You
seem to me grown harder than ever you were.
it with growing gooder? Since I have been here
you have made me feel lower than the mud under
your feet, like a smudge of slime on a gutter-
stone, like a toad in a black puddle. I did not
come here feeling so! I would rather have gone
hide and die. I felt unhappy-oh, sore unhappy!
-but not past pardon wicked! Your face seems
to cut me off from all hope, to be slamming the
doors of heaven in my face-
-
""
"You wretched girl! Will you be pretending
to me to me! that you are an afflicted inno-
cent?"
-
-
"No, no, Mary; no one is innocent, no one but
has done things, many and many, weak and evil
and forbidden You yourself, too, or why do you
pray God's mercy? I am bad enough!
But you
cannot judge me—" she said, gaining a little fire,
as one does when he finds, as he thinks, an irrefut-

able argument. "First, you should have felt all that
I felt, known all that I knew, loved as much as I
did. Your true-love should have been the man
that was mine!"
66
Hush!" hissed Mary, in high anger, laying
both hands in fright upon the Book; in her eager-
ness to be preserved, coming near crumpling the
holy leaves.
"I say nothing meaning to offend you. But I
will swear to you I should never know how wicked

- -
I have been, if it were not that I am so punished!
Will you believe it? I was so blind, so misguided,
I felt only good and kind and most loving, - all
they preach us to be in church, when I was call-
ing down, it seems, damnation upon my head. It
seemed so natural to wish to make happy, and
not to distrust whom I entirely loved. No, no!
Mary, I say nothing to offend your delicate mind.
But what does God mean by such things!'
22
Will you dare to take His Holy Name upon
your lips?"
-
Jenny half rose to her knees, in a natural revolt.
They were old acquaintances, after all. "I will,
Mary Lindsay! For I have not renounced Him
yet, nor He me, though you see me in ragged
clothes! And, mind you, I know that my crimes
would not be so black, either in your eyes, or in
any one's in the world, if my friend had not for-
saken me! But he will come back, wed me with
ring and book, and care for us both, and all be
well and washed away. Meanwhile, I am come to
you, Mary, needy and forlorn and worn out enough,
but I come rather as a beggar for pity, let me
tell you, than as a sinner for pardon! Ah, dear
Lord, how am I talking! and all the while God's
justice following me, and hardening every heart
against me, and my last hope to soften yours! It
is," she whimpered, "that when it seems too much
to bear, I can't but think how little harm I ever
meant, and think too what a dear kind creature he
was, and that I would trust him with my life ten
-

times over.
But there! It must be so! I must
be all that any one says! That little one can't be
let die!"
"There was a better time to think of that
<<
Ah, yes," she answered with a desolate flip-

pancy, "I have seen better times for almost any
purpose! Better times! When I was a girl,
what a light heart I was, you remember, though
with no greater cause to rejoice than you had your-
self. But I was always singing. I never could
have dreamed of such forlornness. I never thought
to beg of you, but rather to offer you my own ser-
vices to command. If you had been me, Mary,
you should have seen Dear Heaven, how is
it that I am making you more and more angry?
Don't, don't look so! I came to try to make you
take me back into your friendship, and you seem to
loathe me worse with every word I say!"
-
"Jenny Gray, will you hold your mouth from
this ungodly talk? That you were a light heart, a
trifler, a singing slattern, is true enough. Little
praise goes with it. I would not call it to remem-
brance, seeing this is how it ends. Will you
tell me in a word what you want of me? If it is
money, I have none. I gave away to-day all I had
saved, for the mission to the heathen. If it is help,
you know my life, how I sew all day long-"
""
-

"But a little comfort, Mary a little counsel -"
'My counsel to you, Jenny Gray, is this: first,
that you repent -
-
""
"I do! I do repent! True as that I am infinitely
miserable, I do!"

POWERS OF DARKNESS.
129
"You do not!" cried Mary. "I have watched
you, hypocrite! You have kept one hand con-
stantly on that bundle of disgrace, fondling it all
the time. There is no mistaking your face when
you look on it."
"That I love my child?
do you mean, Mary?"
Yes, yes. What
"My further counsel is: That having stolen, and,
as you say, repented theft, you give up the stolen.
good, and not take profit and enjoyment from it,
live to find it sweet
66
-
""
Mary, Mary, what do you mean? Your words
are so strange. Where in all the world am I to be
finding an enjoyment, a sweetness?"
"If you truly loathed your misdeeds, on leaving
this place you would take that thing, and go straight
with it to the Foundlings' door, there leave it
never to see it again, and give the rest of your days
to redeeming the past with renunciations and

prayer-"
Jenny uttered a woful little cry, and laid both hands on the baby. "Give up my little son? You mean, put the baby at the Foundlings to be brought up as an orphan, and me go on as a girl?"
"I will then intercede for you with the madam, to take you back. I will speak of you to the par-
I will do for you what I can, so long as you show yourself penitent, and hold an irreproachable conduct-"
son.
Jenny now burst into tears, from sheer bewilderment that the notion bred in her. "To be brought
9

-
up as an orphan in an institution, like you and me, Mary!"
"It is a good place.
mother
66
-
""
Ah, but you are hard!
-
Better than a bad
Don't you remember
—
how lonely we were ourselves, how we used to wonder what our mothers had been, and wish oh, wish they had kept us with them in whatever kind of home!"
"We had all necessary things, as I remember. We were taught to fear God and keep His commandments, though not all of us learned the lesson well—"
"Mary, I could not do it! It is not that I am
not sorry for
But look at him, — you
every error.
-
-
must understand! See how little No If I gave him up, then it would be that I should deserve the worst God could think of! And when his father comes back, what should I say?"
—
"You see you see that you have not put your folly behind you! You would take up all again cheerfully, if the man would but return. Shame on you,—abomination! Abomination! Depart from me! Go, go at once from my door!"
—
Jenny crouched lower on the floor, crushed; spread her arms over the baby, and turned to Mary a face soft and dismal, streaming with tears.
"You have sent me away; and if I had any pride,

I should be gone. But if I had had any pride, I should not have come, or stayed so long already to hear myself called terrible names. Mary," rallying

-

all her strength in a last appeal,- it seemed she could not be denied! "I want to keep alive, to keep this child alive, till his father comes back,- as he will come, I could swear! I don't know what has happened that he delays, I think some one has belied me to him. It must be that! I want to keep alive, and I want to keep honest. He is too little to leave alone yet, and I am getting thinner every day, more unfit whether to work or nurse him, and the woman will not let me have a corner in her house any longer. I have nothing. left to sell but this "she pointed to her hair. "And it is so much, while they would give me so little! And I can't bear to let it go when I am already grown such a fright!"

-

"You are all of a piece, at least!" said Mary, with as near a sneer as was possible to her. "You are thinking there are some would like you less well without that glaring mop-"

66

'If I sell it, Mary," said Jenny, eagerly, "to show you, will you believe I am trying with all my might to keep from worse evil? Will you help me after that, me instead of the heathen? We were

-

—

girls together so many years at the Orphans', think of it! and slept side by side. Will you let me sleep where I sit, just for the sake of a roof, and keeping out of a workhouse, or a prison, or worse? And as soon as it is just a little warmer so that he can stand it, and the first green things have come, I will be out all day hawking flowers, and pay you back for the heathen. If I sell my hair, Mary?"

66

No! I will not be made a bridge stretching from iniquity to iniquity, touching sin with either hand. Take my counsel, which was good. Be rid of the child, swear never again to see the father, cut off that flaunting hair of perdition, begin all anew with a contrite heart, a spirit of lowliness and mortification, and I will call you sister, give you shelter, lift you up again. More than so I will not do; and if I did, I might well be accounted a tool in the Devil's own hand, and no better than yourself."

Jenny held her face buried against the baby, and sobbed. Now he woke and wailed. She gathered him up against her breast to still him, and the two unfriended beings wept together.
Mary had knelt again, and read aloud in a strained, monotonous voice, with her elbows on the table and her thumbs in her ears. She was pale as the page itself.
"I am going," said Jenny at last, who had risen and wrapped the shawl about herself and the hushed child.
"The chariots of God are twenty thousand," read Mary, "even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place"
Jenny sighed and stood waiting a moment, her breast still faintly shaken with her recent weeping.
"But God shall wound the head of his enemies and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses," read Mary.
Then Jenny threw back her head and gave a

sobbing laugh of sheer desperation. The old bonnet dropped off her head, and the bright hair looked more voluminous than ever. The great hollows that were dimples deepened in her cheeks; all her teeth gleamed recklessly. "Good-bye, Mary Lindsay," she said, and her terrible hysterical little laugh resounded over the holy words; "you can hear me, read you never so loud. I will not give him up, do you hear? I will keep him always and always, and go on fondling him and loving him and looking for the day of his father's return, who again will call me pretty and a darling and his faithful Jenny. And until then, I have good hope that we shall not starve. I don't think I shall even have to cut off my hair. Do you hear? I don't think I shall have to sell my hair, glaring mop, as you said, hair of perdition! You have given me such good courage, I have been so helped by this atmosphere of piety and prayer, that I have a solid belief now, if all human beings fail, the ravens will come and feed us. like a prophet, Mary,—like a prophet of the Lord's! Hush, hush, my darling, my lamb," she said to the little one, who had burst out in fresh feeble cries; and while she settled him more comfortably, they neared the door. "Hush! Mother will keep him warm, and feed him on as good as a prince's mother. He never shall be a little orphan in a black frock, with no one to tell him a story at dark, or kiss his poor bumps and scratches
---
""
The door scraped; they were gone.

Grateful silence at last. Mary dropped her voice, still keeping her thumbs in her ears.
So it came to be late. Now she rose from her stiffened knees, and closed the book as one in a dream. Instead of undressing at once, as she did. usually, she sat on the edge of her bed, and stared long in the candle-flame. Then, without change of countenance, but as if pursuing in her mind the reflection that absorbed her, she began unpinning the tight plaits of her hair, and undoing the plaits. It was soft, warm-colored hair, pretty when it fell loose. She drew a strand through her fingers, and appeared to examine it. She rose and shook it out, then went to the window, and looked in the black pane; in imagination she placed the face she saw painted on the night at a street-corner, where again an idle workman admired it passing.
While she looked, absent, white flakes began to drift slowly past, out in the darkness, like little feathers from angels' wings. They obtruded themselves on her vision at last. She drew back from the window with a frightened clutch at her hair, blew out the light, and felt her way to bed in the dark.
The two women had not speech with each other again after that; but as if Jenny had wished Mary to know that she had not perished, nor parted with. the reproved hair, she appeared from time to time. on the path her old friend must follow to find her day's work. When the season had grown a little

milder, she was seen at a street-corner with a basket, the muffled baby in it, half covered and all surrounded with bunches of shivering early flowers, a specimen of which the mother held out to the passer, but forbore to present when Mary went by. Tall, erect, and very pale, daily paler, passed Mary, and daily thinner; till her cheeks were transparent and bluish, and her eyes over-large and luminous. She minded one of a long white altar-candle of purest wax, consumed by a holy flame.
The pastor of a morning listened for her voice. climbing above the others in an ecstasy, daily it had a ring of intenser devotion. Once he kept her a minute after service, and with a gentle concern in his face asked after her health, and bade her take care of herself, calling her sister.
At his words, a frenzy of humility seemed to possess her. She was unable to speak, but stared at him with an eye wide and wild, that slipped obstinately aside when he returned her look.
"You are over-working, my poor sister," he said, and his frozen spirit-face thawed to a semblance of simple human sympathy; "I fear you eat and sleep too little. You must save yourself, for we need you to be an example. You are my sheep with the bell at its neck, that leads the others. On

Easter-morning I shall want you to be at my side,
and help distribute certain symbolic flowers to the
newly confirmed -"
She trembled visibly. She turned from him,
and as if to anticipate some burst of emotion,

strode quickly away, holding out her hands to
save herself if she should fall.
"A pity!-a pity—" said the pastor, sorrow-
fully. "Yet why? There, if ever I saw one, is a
case of the sword wearing out the sheath, the
body wasting, that the soul may thrive."
-
Now Easter-morning was at hand; the next day
arising should commemorate the ancient Arisal
that saves us all, when Jenny, plodding home-
ward through narrow streets at twilight, with her
baby and the wilted wreck of her store, was dogged
at a distance by a woman; who, arriving at the
doorway Jenny passed through, a few moments
later than she, stepped into the shadow behind the
door, and there awaited, one could scarcely say
what, for she seemed on the look-out for none.
When the house was grown quiet enough for one
to suppose it had disposed itself more or less for
the night's rest, she crept from her hiding, groped
up the stairs, for there was no light, running her
hand along the wall. When she had reached a
landing, guided by a thread of light, she felt for the
first door, and listened; rough male voices sounded
inside. She passed, felt for the next door, and hear-
ing nothing, opened it noiselessly, and thrust a pale
face in, which she promptly withdrew at a
shouted inquiry, and groped for the next flight of
stairs.
-
So she pried into a dozen chambers, varying in
their degrees of poverty and disorder; had a glimpse

of families at tea, of a sick man on a pallet with a
child wetting his forehead, of an elderly hag mend-
ing a sack, a man and woman quarrelling over
half-a-dozen copper coins. At last, under the very
roof, she plainly found the room she sought, for,
having peered in, she did not withdraw her head.
It was lighted by the coals in the grate only. On
the floor, in the rosy glow, sat Jenny, bending her
head over the nursing baby. The woman crept in
with the stealth of a prowling animal, yet not so
softly but the crazy floor creaked. Jenny looked
up, blinked, and exclaimed, "Mary!"
Mary stood still and looked down on her without
a word.
The two stared at one another for a long
minute.

Jenny felt a sort of terror creep through her hair; there was a ghastliness in the intruder's pallor, in the spectral steadiness of her eyes. She started up in alarm at her prolonged stillness, and cried out, "What is it? Do speak! Don't frighten me so. You might be your own ghost. Mary, Mary, what do you want with me?"

Mary moved a little nearer, still without speaking.

Jenny put out a hand to touch or prevent her. She had been sitting in the heat; the other's hand seemed to her cold as ice.

"Oh, how cold you are!" she said, shivering "do sit down by the fire. You shall tell me in your own good time what you want. Is it, Mary," she asked impulsively, while she fetched an old quilt from a corner, and folded it for a seat, "that

you feel less hard toward me, and are come to tell me, knowing what a comfort it will be? God bless you for it! The worst is over now, praise God, yet I am hungry for good words. Oh, Mary, if that were what had brought you! for I never can forget how we were girls together, and you used to hear my Bible verse, so patient and kind."

Mary pushed the heaped quilt with her foot, till it was out of the range of the ruddy light, and sat down on it; it crushed so small that her knees were almost to her chin. She clasped her ankles, and looked forth from the shadow with great pale lashless eyes.

Jenny sat down again with the baby, and, though full of evident wonder and uneasiness, talked on with the friendly thought to institute a comfortable atmosphere in which confidence should become possible. "Yes, the worst, praise God, is over. I am stronger, and summer is coming. I tell you this, Mary, because I know in the bottom of your heart you don't wish me ill, sinner though I am, and you bound to denounce and condemn me. I can sell flowers enough to keep us alive. Do you know, as if Heaven guided him, a man will sometimes pass another girl at a corner near, who needs it less, and buy of me instead? Or perhaps it is because I look smilingly. I have learned to do that. have good hope. I have heard from him through a person from the same county, for his home is far from here. It is his father and mother have kept And I

him away. They have told him such as I would. soon get over the loss of him, and take up with another. He was plighted to a girl from his own

place, before he took up with me that he loved
better. Now they lie to him about me, so that he
shall have her. But I have sent him a word, which
if it reaches him will touch his heart.
you been ill?”
Mary, have
"No!" came a stiff voice from the shadow.
Jenny peered anxiously a moment at Mary, try-
ing vainly to see her better. The red light was
fading, and there was no more coal. Suddenly
Jenny's lip trembled. "Why do you keep me in
suspense?" she asked sharply and hurriedly, hardly
knowing what she said. "I feel as if something ter-
rible were coming; my scalp crawls. It is like a
red-hot hand on my heart, and an icy one at my
throat, while you sit there never moving your eyes
off me, nor saying a word
""
She had hardly finished, when the little room
rang with a laugh, a curious laugh, vivid and cack-
ling in the first notes, then, like the same thrown
back from echoing rock to rock.
"Mary! Mary!" screamed the young mother,
putting her child behind her, and turning a blanched
face to the visitor. There was a silence, broken
only by Jenny's frightened breathing.
"I never liked you, Jenny Gray!" said Mary at
last, composedly.
"Alack-a-day! what have I ever done to you?"
moaned Jenny.

"I could n't say, myself. But I never liked you.
And if I am come to you, I want you to understand
that it is because you are the lowest person I can
think of in all my acquaintance."
66
Mary, are you gone mad? This is no way to
come into a person's own house, and speak to her
before her son. All the more if it is, as it seems to
be, a favor you have to ask."
"That is it," said Mary, "a favor to ask.
What day is to-morrow?"
"Easter-day; you know it."
"No, I don't. Every day has been the day before
Easter, since I can remember. Are you sure?”
“As sure as that yesterday was the death of our
Lord."
Well, then, can I trust you to go to-morrow
morning early, to the little church in Church Street,
and say to the parson there, him that was at Mother
Wilder's with us two when she died, that I cannot
assist him to give out certain symbolic flowers to
the newly confirmed, - being that I am dead?"
66
Mary!"
"Will you do this," she asked violently, " or have
you lied when you spoke of loving me, -- and with

a good will I could put my hands around your throat, and give you a purple necklace on it."
"Mary, this is horrible! I will go. I will do anything you ask, but don't glare at me like that, curdling my blood. What has come over you? I am afraid! What good can come of my saying you are dead? He will soon know better."

No, no, that he won't," said Mary, little above a whisper; "it is all over now. He will not see me again. Do you know of a cellar, a good dark cellar? You must find one for me. I will go live in it, with a little straw."
66
Mary," now said Jenny, in a most tender tone, anxious, but no longer frightened, and without rising from her knees she came toward the girl, and felt her hands and head, "you are ill, dearie. You must be ill, indeed, and your mind is not clear. Let me make you comfortable. You can't go out again to-night in the wet. I will put something hot to your feet. and bathe your head. What do you feel?"
Mary caught the tentative hands, and holding them in a hard grip brought Jenny's face close, and held her eyes fascinated by the fixed glance of her own.
"What do you see?" she asked.
"Oh, where?"
"There! In my eyes!"
"Nothing, Mary. Just the red reflection of the fire on the skylight-'
"Ha! — The red reflection!"
"What do you mean? But no! You are delirious, that is clear. Lie down; I will make you well. Don't be proud and refuse, or you will break my heart. Let me do something to make myself forgiven. It is true, dearie, that I used to love you, not lately, not after that time, but now again!" and she was feeling at Mary's throat to unfasten her gown, when her hands were stopped.

-
-
"I am not ill," said Mary, in a more natural voice; "I am quite clear in my mind. Why do you go about," she added sharply, "to discover what ails me?" Then, inconsequently, “I came here on purpose to tell you. Yes, since I have to tell some one, or go mad, why not you,- - a miserable wretch, a lost soul, too, in whose presence I shall feel least ashamed? But that is not all. have a soft heart, though I liked you never the better for it. You would grant an urgent request, nine or any one's keep a promise, to me or any

other. Look in my face, now, square; don't be
afraid. Look in my face, I tell you! What do
you see?"
You
"Nothing, dearie. No spot, no sign of any ill-
ness that I know. You
you - you have not
been where there is contagion?"
"Illness! Look again! Not at the skin! Look
deep deep! What do you see?"
"I see," said Jenny, her voice trembling, and the
ready tears coming, "a pale, pale face, the face of
a just woman, who has prayed much, and kept her
light burning, looking for the coming of the Lord
in every hour; who has denied herself every joy
in the search after righteousness, and placed both
feet crushingly upon sin, as it deserved, as it
deserved! I see the face that, lifted in church, has
most made me think of angels, pure and meek and
luminous. I see the face I used to hope mine
might become like, when we were in the old.
orphan-school, and you were the model girl, never
-

in error.
-
Ah, Maty, Maty, yes, I will call you
by your pet name again, - I see a poor dear face,
all worn and ill and wild. What is it ails you?
What, in God's name, are you trying to tell me?
Why do you torment yourself?"
"I" said Mary, whose face while Jenny spoke
had fallen to trembling too, and who now choked
and caught wildly at her throat; "I have a devil!"
At the sound of her own words, she clapped her
hands over her ears and crouched with her face
between her knees, till her form could scarcely be
told for human.
Jenny gazed at her blankly. Then as she did
not lift her face again, she found the only thing to
do to draw nearer, close beside her. She put a
cherishing arm around the bowed shoulders, and
tried to lift the bowed head. "Tell me," she said
in a sensible, soft every-day voice that she had an
instinct must bring a delirious person to a clearer
sense of the reality, "tell me all about it; tell me
everything."
Then Mary lifted her head a little, so that her
lips came above her knees, and spoke, not as Jenny
had expected, not with the same effect of incoher-
ence as before, but collectedly, in a sharp whisper
that woke sibilant echoes in the dark corners,
"You remember that morning we met, the first
time in many months, and I repulsed you, you
filled me with such loathing? Till then I had.
been free. I worked for my salvation with a good
hope of the end. I had that morning purchased

souls to God's glory. I felt so pure as never before, peaceful, and secure in God's favor. He must have been waiting for me there, just there, the black angel, roaming to find in whom he should lodge. For, a moment after I had passed you, a stranger spoke to me on the street, and a curious thought crossed my mind, involuntary, which seemed to leave a stain behind. Then, at my work, again a curious thought came to me, unlike what I was accustomed to, and I had to entertain it a moment, just to see what it was like, when Nancy Prout asked me what I was thinking, and I spoke sharply, for I felt as if it must show in my face. When I was standing by Lady Gramercy, who was trying a silken gown, something said inside of me, 'Ye ugly fat swine, encase yourself tight in silk and buckram till ye nigh burst for breath, play the peacock while ye are on earth, for in hell ye shall be differently served!' and she that had praised me for a good girl, and was looking kind! At first they came few and far, like the first flakes of snow, - only, flakes of soot they were, Jenny; then they came thicker and thicker. And I prayed against them; but in the middle of my prayer, I would have stopped before I knew it, to consider one; and it seemed I was amused with it, though I was frightened, too. And it grew worse. When I said a good word, quoted from the Bible, the very con-
trary of what I said would shape itself in my mind, so that I heard it like a voice in my ear; and it would seem to me, that the evil one was the sentiment
-

my whole being approved, the other a mask, a mock. When others spoke good words, it was the same; the fiend would pervert them to an impiety, an outrage, seeming to laugh and rub his hands. And all the while, me trying to look like always! lifting my voice in church louder and louder, so that nothing should appear, so that the dark one's voice should be drowned in mine. In church, there it was the worst of all! There he jeered and cackled most; there he behaved so that I thought my neighbor must smell brimstone and roasting flesh. The holier the object, the better for his horrible purpose. Jenny, my mother, my poor mother whom I never knew, how he has attacked and dragged her in mud! And the parson, Jenny, the parson, who is a saint, whom to have praise me once I would have starved, prayed on my knees till I turned to stone, whose good opinion I lived for, with him it is worse still. How could I ever look in his face again? Give out white flowers,' said he! And there is worse than that, Jenny, but I can't say

it, so bad that I can't say it! I can see him in my mind, clear as I feel him in my breast. He is small as a cat, and black as a coal, with scarlet eyes. He sits on my heart. I feel him as a weight and a burning; sometimes when I try to pray, he drives his claws into my lungs to make me stop. He can stretch himself up so that he looks out from behind my eyes, and he speaks in my ear in a fine whisper like sap in burning wood. If I do what he does n't want me to, he pushes his head up in
-
10

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POWERS OF DARKNESS.
my throat so that I can't breathe, and I have to yield to him or strangle. There! Now he is speaking. He says, holding his sides, A fine tale! A fine tale! And you have chosen your confidante well!' Then he calls you horrible, horrible names, Jenny, such as have never passed my lips; and because he can't make me say them aloud, he says them over and over inside of me. A fine pair, he says, we make for his kingdom down below; and it was he pushed me to come to you, of all people, whom I had heaped most contempt upon!"
66
Maty, Maty," said Jenny Gray, almost hysterical with fright, yet never loosing her hold on her friend, "I understand it all I see clearly through it all. Believe me, this is a trial; it is a temptation, such as has come to saints, I have often heard said. Resist him, Maty dear, with all your might resist him, and he must leave! Defy -
him when he chokes you, and he will crouch down. Call on God, dearie! There, hold my baby, who is innocent as the angels are
"Pah! Take him away.
""
You should hear what
we think of innocence · and babies!"
-
"This is too frightful-
"Did n't I tell you?"
""
"Oh, Maty, rouse yourself.
skirts and don't be shaken off.
mercy! Cry on Him, dearie,
your soul."
Lay hold on God's
Lay hold on His
cry on Him with all
But Mary began laughing so that her whole body shook. "If you knew how tired I am of God!”

POWERS OF DARKNESS.
147
she said at last in a jaunty voice not her own, and added under breath with a look of stark terror, " yet

how unutterably — unutterably afraid!"
-
Jenny Gray seized her resolutely by the shoul-
ders. "Mary," she said with the energy of one at
the last measure, now you don't say one word
more! Not one word! or I muffle your mouth.
No! not a word!" and as the other rebelliously
tried to speak again, she put her hand over her
lips, and forcing her against the wall held it there
while she struggled.
-
The eyes that had glared over the hand were
suddenly quenched. The lids dropped over them,
and Mary leaned back, exhausted. Jenny took her
old school-mate's head on her shoulder, where it
drooped limp. "You shall not say one word more.
You shall lie down and fold your hands, and think
of nothing but to try to sleep, while I will put water
on your head, and pray aloud, — no, not pray, but
sing to the baby-and God will know what it is
meant for. There, take these between your hands,
Maty; they are cool and smell good. They are
geranium leaves and three pansies and a bit of an
early rose. No one would buy them, I don't know
why, and now they are half withered. Mercy, how
I should like to see the country-garden where they
grew! Shouldn't you? I never saw a country-
garden,-only the flower-market. I imagine heaven
like a country-garden with a million flowers of
every sort"
She let Mary softly down from her arms, propped

her head on an old bundle, covered her close. The
girl suffered all to be done to her as if she had been
a corpse. She lay flat, with her hands cramped on
the faded nosegay, and her eyes sealed. Jenny sat
beside her, cooling her forehead, crooning to the
baby. She did not know when Mary went to
sleep, nor how she herself followed.
She was aware of a moving, and woke. The
light was dark-gray still. She dimly saw the girl
at her side lifted on her elbow, staring. "What is
that?" she whispered, pointing upward.
-
"It is the skylight, and Easter-morning dawn-
ing behind it."
Mary sat up, and touched her forehead.
66
'How do you feel, dearie?" asked Jenny.
"My head is like wood, and my breast like wood,
without sensation in them whatever. I have slept
without a dream. Or,—I don't think I slept. I
have lain in a trance, yet a clear thought has grown
in my head since I was last conscious. It is this:
that my days are numbered, and unless I be rid of
this devil before I die, my soul must burn in hell
forever. This devil God afflicted me with for my

sins, which were of pride and self-seeking and hard-
ness of heart. Now must you, poor, misguided,
sweet hearted, forgiving Jenny, for the sake of your
old devotion, find me a cellar, dark and solitary,
where I can take up my abode, and strive with the
spirit possessing me. I shall require nothing but
the Book and a light to read it by, and that my
life may be prolonged till I shall have overcome, —
—

daily water and bread. You shall tell the parson
that I am dead; madam the mantua-maker and my
companions that I come no more. Sell my bed to
buy me candles and bread, and your baby a little
hood, a little blue hood, for you are a hard mother
to take him out in the sharp air with a bare
head
—
""
Jenny had bent over her, and was kissing her
hands. "You will be quite well again now, dear-
est girl, soon," she said comfortingly. "You are
quite yourself; you see, he has left you already."
Mary snatched her hands away. "That he
has n't," she cried.
till this moment.
"Only, he was not yet awake
The devil a hood shall your
baby have, ugly little vermin, ugly little-but oh,
Jenny," she added in an agony, with the look in her
eye of a shot bird, “forgive me all I may say. Get
me the cellar quickly, for the time is short; and do
all that I told you. Now I will shut my mouth,
and do you beat me if I speak,-for that was good
counsel of yours last night”
She lay back again, and held herself stiffly quiet,
with eyes and lips tight shut. After watching
her with bated breath a while, Jenny was overcome
again with sleep.
The day came in with sunshine; early the bells
began ringing.
Mary asked suddenly while she listened, "What
is that?"
"They are the Easter-bells," said Jenny.
Mary sat up, clasped her knees, and turned a

look of infinite amusement on the rosily shining
skylight. She began rocking herself forwards and
backwards to suppress her laughter.
if you
"If you knew!" she burst out at last,
knew what I am thinking! About bells and Sab-
bath-days- and such! But I won't tell you, or
you would hit me on the head with a chair-leg,
and there an end, my beauties, and there an

end!"
-
The cellar was under an old untenanted house that had half fallen to ruin inside; the glass was broken in all the windows; the lock of the door had been picked years before. Of a night sometimes certain of the houseless crawled in to sleep; they seldom came twice, such noises were in the walls, under the floors, overhead, -noises of unseen finger-nails beating a tattoo, scraping against glass. For many days, Jenny Gray going there with meat and drink, must leave them outside the door; the recluse would not admit her. In vain she affectionately demanded and pleaded. She could hear moving behind the bolts, the rustling of straw, now and then a cough, a voice forbidding her. If she lingered to listen after the one within might judge her gone, she heard the voice, grown unfamiliar, lifted in incoherent snatches, now of prayer, now of blasphemy.

One day at last she would not be refused. She knocked urgently, and called, "Mary! Mary! Mary!" long after the other had shut herself in

obstinate silence. "I must see you, dearie," she insisted. "Do open! I have something to tell you, - many things; and I must see your face, dearie, I truly must. I shall have to get some one to force the door, if you won't open; but, oh, for the sake of all I would do for you if I could, do open yourself. Have n't I come every day faithful, and done all you asked me, and told no one of your hiding? There, now you are going to reward me. There! that is right!"

Footsteps had approached from within; there was a fumbling with the bolt, and the door swung open. Jenny pressed in, fearing a repentance; a form withdrew before her, back into the deepest of the shadow.

It was clear blue daylight in the sky; faint token of this came through the narrow barred window, higher than one could reach, on a level with the street.

Jenny set down her basket, and, approaching her friend half in fear of what change she might see in her, examined her face in the poor light.

Mary had sat, down in the straw again, and played absently with a wisp, her eyes fixed upon nothing.

Jenny sank down beside her, and felt sorrow seizing on her heart, as the chill of the damp stone walls seized on her flesh. She had come here agitated, hurried; she had brought to the dark place, as if in her veins, the effect of the light, the bustle, the cheerful jumble of living noises in the upper

world; many words to say had bubbled on her lips. Now, she could not speak; something caught her at the throat; all interest in her own affairs and herself faded from her mind. No finite thing seemed of any consequence.
Mary's face was quite quiet; the lines of ancient torment smoothed out to a blank. She looked like the shadow of herself, a mere effect of black and gray. When she turned her hollow eyes on Jenny, the look of hopelessness in them, combined with abject patience, was such, that there were tears in Jenny's voice when she asked, "How is it with you, dearie?"
66
'Well, well," answered Mary.
"You mean," said Jenny, her heart quickening, and a ray of hope glancing through her compassionate soul, "that he has left you, that you are free?"
Mary shook her head sadly. "He is always there. He never leaves me. Truly, he that keeps me neither slumbers nor sleeps. But I am grown accustomed to him now, - resigned. God has punished me in this way. Well, it is but hell begun a little early; the horror of the first after death will be the less."
Jenny stared, in amazement at the indifference in her friend's tone. Then she saw, with a blow on her heart, that behind such a face as this before her could not be much life left; that whatever could be done must be done quickly. "Mary, listen to me," she said, taking the unresisting, claw-like

hands in hers.
"This must not be, that you despair of God's mercy. Take courage! Think on forgiveness; think on pity inexhaustible as the sea
-
-
""
"Why, yes, mercy, forgiveness, pity, who questions them?" Mary answered in an unmoved tone. “The Father is good, that all know. The devils know it as well as the angels. But they do not apply to me. I, through the black spot in my soul, belong to the devil, who has but claimed me prematurely. I was minded to drive a sharp bargain with Heaven; I was lowly here, to be set the higher hereafter. God would not have it. He gave over such poor stuff to the fiend, His enemy. Have I not struggled with him these many days? And he has not yielded an inch! If you knew what struggles! The sweat poured from my brow, -bloody sweat. Now, at last I know without a doubt who has the good claim upon me. There is

no help; I must be content. I have no strength
left to fight. Truth to tell, I have no desire, either,
to contend any more.
What I love to do now is to
-
sit as you see me,
dream. When I do
-
-
and dream, and dream, and
not try to pray, he is less
clamorous; so I sit and idle. He speaks to me; I
do not heed him, I let him gabble on. He knows
he will have all time in which to torment me;
he is less keen to make me hear every word than
before. I can brush aside what he says, and think
my own thoughts, dream and dream!"
-
Oh, what do you dream, poor Mary, while you
believe that heaven is shut to you?"

Mary smiled strangely, and nodded to herself
without answer.
"Mary, dearie," said Jenny, with the urgency of
who feels there is not a moment to lose, shaking
the possessed one's hands to rouse her, "is it wise
to fold your hands, now when the good end may be
near attained, — when the bad end may be near at
hand? Alack-a-day! I know so little of the mat-
ters of the soul! Would that I were wiser! But
it seems to me terrible to sit down in front of the
awful door idly at the last, when perhaps a little
more might save you, defeat him. Mary, why do
you smile like that, nodding to yourself? One
would think almost that you were pleased
"I am thinking of heaven."
"Heaven!"
She nodded.
"Heaven."
"
Jenny watched her, sure that her poor mind was
going.
-
Mary fixed her white eyes on a vague point
somewhere overhead. "The foundation all of pre-
cious stones," she said, sketching little descriptive
gestures with her hands, "twelve in number:
jasper, it reads; sapphire, blue like the sky;
chalcedony I never knew what that was like,
but it sounds well, chalcedony; emerald, that is
green; sardonyx; sardius, red, said the parson to
me; chrysolite; beryl, green; topaz; chrysoprasus,
that is green, too; jacinth; last, amethyst. Ah,
how pretty, how pretty! And a sea of glass
and gates of pearl, a golden city; and the just
-
-

with a name written upon their foreheads. Then outside, I think, though the Book says nothing of that, all green meadows the color of an April leaf, full of daisies and brooks and low hills. But I wish I knew!"
"Hush, dearie! You break my heart. You will see them, Mary; never doubt it. You will see heaven; you will see it!"
"Not I!" She shook her head with a placid, sad certainty. "But through me, another soul!" and her face lighted a little, as if with pleasure at the mystery she made," a little dusky, heathen soul."
What do you mean?"
66
I bought it!" she declared, with a beginning of excitement. "I ransomed it. I pinched and pinched, I saved and saved, and I gave my money for the mission. I thought God would be beholden to me for acquiring sheep to His flock. He saw through my deed to its root, and rejected it! But there was the money! the solid, current coin, — the effect of that would be the same. The missionary took it; he sailed away; he preached Christ to the heathen. And they that had worshipped idols were turned to the faith. And the money given by me was surely instrumental in saving one, — one soul! The parson could not assure me of the number the amount I gave might be supposed to redeem; but there is nothing less than one! It might be a very little one, that of a child, perhaps, but one there must be. So, though I never get to heaven, I shall be represented there, spite of every-

-
thing! I like to think of him," she added, recurring to her dreamy tone of before,-"a poor little soul that had no chance but to burn eternally; and then he found himself instead, when he died, come to the gold city, the unfading fields full of wonder and joy, to the very presence of the dear Lord. He will go from flower to flower; he will sing with the others, and never ask who set him there—"
"Yes, comfort yourself with that, feed your mind on that, and I-I will go, but soon come back. Yet I had good news to tell you when I came; I don't want to leave without telling it, though I have no heart now for being glad. The world is changed to me, Mary,— my life is changed. Dan, my man, is come back."
"Who is he?" she asked vaguely.
"Oh, no matter. Drink this, Mary; take this in your hand and eat. And soon I will be back. Have patience till then. Don't pray, but think

fast of heaven
""
What she had to do brooked no delay; she left
in all haste to carry out a design that had formed
in her mind a moment before, on realizing her poor
friend's condition.
Mary made no objection to her going, but re-
mained on her straw, absorbed.
The light began to fail; there were sounds near
of small galloping feet. A swift blackness darted
across the dark floor, then another; there was a
collection of shadows about the basket Jenny had
left, and a rustling and a bickering.
bickering. Mary shrank

with a purely physical horror at a circumstance she
was barely conscious of.
But a vast uneasiness was possessing her, such
as some feel at the approach of a hurricane in a
midsummer night, though still the stars shine, and
there is no sign but in the sickening of their nerves.
An icy hand seemed to be stealing near to her
warm heart, that fluttered, faltered at its approach,
and no more could get away than the fascinated
bird from under the hawk's glance. She felt a
need to break this bond of terror, cry aloud to
deafen her fears, lift her mind out of this darksome
crawling place on wings of prayer, though the
demon should pluck at them presently.
struck for thy
Then grant me
The soul I
What a field of release had once been open to
her always! She knelt suddenly, in haste to get
a little headway before pursued, and from a mind
thrown back by suffering to childishness, uttered
a supreme request. "The end is near, my God!
The last hour, perhaps, already is
servant. Soon I shall not pray.
one little prayer while yet is time.
saved, the little soul, let me see it, whether it be of
child, or man or woman grown. I crave to see it!
I crave to see it, to comfort myself with in hell—"
And over and over she uttered words in this sense;
her voice climbing, climbing as if she begged for
her life, till it dropped from its height with a
choking, then climbed again. Suddenly she
stopped short, it was as if a vibrating string had
snapped; she did not breathe, straining her eyes
toward a moving in the shadow.
-

The day was almost gone. Out of the shadow
emerged, softly as a cloud forms, a darker shadow.
A pale spot floated over it, this had great fixed

light eyes; the features under these were thin and worn and delicately stern.
Mary stared with sharpening eyes, while it drew a little nearer and a little nearer. She lifted her arms, and, with a shriek that must have made the blood of the stoutest run cold, -ending in a laugh, a sob, and a strangling, fell forward on the floor.
-
She woke to consciousness of a glimmer of light. She felt her hair cold and wet. She looked long, without moving, at a form sitting near her on the straw, reading the Book by a candle-end.
When she stirred at last, the Book was laid down; a face she well remembered was turned to her.
cr
"The parson!" she murmured, "my old heart's idol; but with a difference, oh, with a difference!"
Jenny Gray has told me, my poor sister," he said in an accent of gentlest kindness, and took her hand in his in a holy love.
"She came to call me
entered softly; it was
for you, to help you. I
thoughtless. I did not think to frighten you so.,
Now you must tell me all, and earnestly together we will strive
-
""
But Mary shook her head and smiled bafflingly, with the roguishness of a half-witted child that has come upon a great secret good.
"It is late now;
it is of no more use to relate to you the terrible

me
awe,
-
-
story, talk of sin, of horror. For I am saved! I am saved! God sent me a token, - love His holy name forever! Listen, you. I prayed to be shown the heathen soul ransomed by me with mission-money, and, will you think it, God in answer showed myself! I saw my own face, like that of a spirit coming out of the darkness. I am saved!" she cried exultingly, then dropping her voice in "But the hour is near, - is very near. You shall help me therefore make myself fair to appear before my Lord. On your knees, you too, and up-hold me, or I shall fall. So. Now we will pray and sing, and sing, until day breaks. What can you sing? I like this the best of all-" and in a crazy cracked voice, but with an enraptured face, she began a homely hymn of the orphan-school, forgotten these long years, that now, as if she had returned to childhood, rose naturally to her lips:

—
"Into Egypt pilgrims three,
Jesus, Joseph, and Mary,
Travelled day and travelled night;
Angels kept them in their flight —
•
ww
'My sister," said the parson, trying vainly to
gain her attention, "be
exhaust your strength so!
many things you would wish said, wish done-
silent a moment. You
And there may still be
She did not hear him. She sang further, -
"Joseph walked till wellnigh spent ;
On his arm tired Mary bent.
He that was to suffer worst,
In that hour slept on her breast."
-—
""

"Listen, my sister, listen," he begged of her.
"What?" she asked, unexpectedly stopping short,
and listening indeed keenly for sounds without.
There came a faint noise from beyond the door,
a shuffling of feet, it seemed to the pastor.
-
"It must be Jenny Gray," he said, while Mary,
with dilating eyes, watched the door, not heeding
him, expecting to see he knew not what.
"She is
coming to say good-bye to you. Her husband takes
her away with him to his home."
He took the light, to meet them, as by the uncer-
tain sliding of their feet he divined they were find-
ing their way in darkness.
The door opened softly. A fair woman stood in
it with a young child in her arms, the same shawl
coming about the heads of both; beside her, a little
behind, looked in a strong bearded head. In the
uncertain golden candle-gleam, her face seemned to
smile benignly, all the faces seemed to smile
and shine and waver.
Mary watched them ecstatically a moment,
stretching out her hands.
"Into Egypt pilgrims three,"
she tried to sing,
"Jesus, Joseph, and Mary — "
Then, though the pastor tried to prevent it with
his shielding hand, the draught from the door had
sucked out the light. In the darkness the fright-
ened, breathless people heard the fall of a body,
and the child set up a piteous crying.

IN
THE LATE RETURNING.

N the fair, good city of Florence lived upon a time a reputable citizen by name Ser Vincenzo Brunori, and Francesca, his wife. They were blessed with numerous children, none among whom was more pleasingly endowed by nature, or called forth more approval from all that beheld her, than Violante, the third in order. Hardly had this young maiden reached an age to think of marriage, when there presented himself to her father a suitor for her hand, one Gianni Altemura, well-favored in his person, agreeable in his manner and conversation, and possessed of a sufficient fortune.
—

Ser Vincenzo demurred a time before giving his consent to a union between his daughter and this applicant, - perhaps that he so might seem to attach more value to the prize he was preparing to part with; but the damsel herself betrayed the greatest impatience at his moderation. So unrestrainedly she expressed her wish to be gone with this Gianni, so brightly did her face bloom and shine when there was any question of him; finally, so voluble and passionate did she become in speaking of his merits, that it was suspected their. acquaintance did not date from his proposal to
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espouse her.

It was thought, though Violante denied it always, that there had been words between them previous to his formal presentation, perhaps even writings. A wholesome example would have been now to refuse these suspected lovers to one another; but her parents were loath to break their child's heart, as she declared they were doing already with these delays. They granted their benediction, and Ser Gianni carried off his bride.

One can scarcely form an idea of the point to which Violante appeared to congratulate herself on her new life. It was every day in new robes and gems she came to visit her family, inviting them to her house to feasts and banquets at which many others assisted as well: new-made friends and neighbors, old associates of her husband's, - jolly youths of the city, among whom she seemed at pains to find husbands for her elder sisters.

At these feasts everything was spread before the guests in such lavish fashion; there was such an extravagant assemblage of skilled lute and viol players to make light the hours with song,—that Ser Vincenzo began to knit his brows, asking how his son-in-law could afford to be put so frequently

to such expense. He had inquired minutely into his fortune, and knew it could not long stand the drain of these festivities. He gave the young couple words of excellent advice, and Francesca struggled with her daughter that she should desist

in courses that could not fail to bring her husband to ruin. The old people's interference appeared to have had a good effect; but it soon came to their ears that entertainments distinguished by their character of prodigality had been held in the son-in-law's house without the benefit of their presence. Greatly offended at this, as was not unnatural, they cut themselves off more and more from the headstrong young ones, who were too far steeped in their new happiness to feel anything keenly that had not to do with their love.

At last, as if they could invent nothing better to rid them quickly of the little burden of wealth remaining, they undertook a journey for pleasure. They set out, followed by domestics and sumpter-mules; her young laugh and the candid feather in his bonnet wavered brightly on the fresh morning wind as they cantered forth from Florence by the Holy Cross gate, and, skirting the yellow river, plunged in among the spring-time hills.

The next their acquaintance knew of them was that they lived in one of many narrow houses by the river, huddled close for easier defence; their following, one man and one maid; their garden and plaisance, an open loggia on the housetop, where she watered a few roots of basil and sage; their dress, wool, and of the simplest; their food, porridge.

Her family, after many reminders of their warnings, wished to take her back to live with them; but to this she would never consent. It was sur-

prising how contented she could make herself if but Gianni Altemura was by. A hovel with him, or a hole in the earth, suited her better than would have done a king's palace with the king.

And he returned her tenderness with as devout and constant a passion. This is not to say that they never quarrelled; being both of a lively temperament, they had quick words at intervals, with tears from her and oaths never to have any further dealings with him though she lived to a hundred, and oaths from him that he could not endure the sight of her, and she was grown ugly. But they always ended by embracing and imploring pardon for the hurts they had inflicted. In these moments more than ever Altemura grieved over the miserable condition they were fallen in, vowing to

build up their fortunes again, though he gave his blood.

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One day, having caught there was no denying it a glimpse of his wife's little foot through her shoe, he resolved that the time was come to make good his words. He took the small sum remaining of all his fortune, that he, with a prudence that seemed uncharacteristic, had saved for just such a purpose, and mingled with the merchants of the city to see how he might invest it to make it more. He talked with many of ventures and gains, methods and chances of market, till he became greatly interested in all these matters; and by close attention and natural intelligence had gained so much from his conversation with the merchants, that he

presently laid out his patrimony in such a way as soon to double it.

At this first success he was filled with good hope, and Violante felt instant confidence in the return of their prosperity.

The merchant, who, by his advice, had been principally concerned in Gianni's good fortune, delighted at the shrewdness and capacity displayed by his pupil, soon associated him with himself; and with a view to making the most profitable use of his talents, sent him on a journey to Cyprus, to make or to deliver purchases. So Gianni must take leave of his young wife.

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At his departure, her parents wished again to have her with themselves; but she would not. She preferred remaining on the scene of her happiness; she preferred, further, the spot where she could be her own independent mistress, as, being a married woman, she saw no fitness in subjecting herself to a mother and two unmarried sisters. This conduct in her did not incline her family any more than before to forgive her various offences; they omened many an evil arising from her contumacy and her unprotected situation, and were seldom at pains to seek her in the bare house where she awaited Gianni's return. She took all in frank patience, nothing doubting that in a few months, at the extremest one year, the man of her heart would be restored to her with riches more than ever before, and again would begin the feasting with the lute-players and the dancing.

Several months went by. Violante endured without a murmur a life devoted to thinking of her love, recalling, with an emotion almost as great as she had felt on receiving them, his caresses and tender words, building in imagination a future not

wanting in such demonstrations. She entertained herself daily talking of him with Tita, her woman, - a kindly, elderly soul, devoted to the interests of her master. Feeling herself in her affections as one of the family, this Tita had insensibly adopted the notion of being a remote kinswoman of Ser Gianni's, and with every year the degree of their kinship became closer.

As the time approached in which she expected her husband, Violante's spirits rose to a feverish agitation of joy; but before the day arrived she had fixed upon as the latest he could possibly delay, came a letter from him and a purse of ducats. She must be patient a little longer; his affairs were taking him still further from her than Cyprus, he was gone to Balsora. His letter was heartily affectionate; many were the tears she shed over it. So a year passed, a long year to Violante. Then again, when the time was approaching for her lord's return, and her spirits were reviving as a drooping plant timely watered, came a missive and came money. His affairs were taking him to Teheran, where they weave silk and gold so cunningly. He had met with reverses, but was now again on the road to success. Tarry for him patiently, his idolized little wife, to adorn whose bosom with gems he

spent his nights in vigil, and deprived himself so long of love. Her reception of this letter, it is but honest to say, varied a little from that of the last. She took what opportunity she could find to send him remembrance of herself, which was rare, as Dominic, her man, who went to inquire at the places where the merchants most congregated, did not often meet with one bound for so distant a place as Teheran. It will scarcely be wondered at that she was sometimes oppressed with a sense of the tediousness of life, and shed flat tears of mere ennui, as our eyes water with yawning. For her could be no pleasures! She had too great pride in her husband's name to expose herself to the chance of occasioning any gossip; and a young woman so amiable, with a husband so far, was but too likely to be pursued by certain ones, and maligned by certain others, did she appear before the world, and give it the spectacle of her natural young liveliness. She could tell him when he returned how she had lived, seeing no one, spending of the money he sent barely what was needed to subsist on!

Meanwhile he did not seem sensible of her self-denial; from Teheran came word to her he was pushing on with a caravan into India. She had to employ all the strength of her heart to keep in mind that it was, after all, for her sake that he took these terrible journeys. She became a confirmed waiter, never over-expectant, never despairing. From pale and languid that she was during the first year of

her widowhood, she returned of a wholesome color

and carriage, and, as Tita declared to her, more and more beautiful with every day that passed. The affairs of her heart no doubt remained for her the most interesting thing; but she took the greatest interest besides in all the little details of daily life. She lent ear greedily to Tita's report from the market-place: who bought, who sold; what rumors were afloat concerning that girl of the Adimari and the youngest Pazzi; whether it was true the Orsini might be looked to, to make trouble; why watermelon was so dear. She watched her neighbors with infinite obligation to them when they put a little variety into their movements.

Sometimes, as at night, undressing by her single taper, she looked at her white arms, a sort of pity took her; and she said the most fervent prayers, kneeling before a little plaster Saint John, to prosper Gianni in the far land he visited, and soon, soon to bring him home.

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Now it happened that those Orsini of whom was so often question in Tita's chronicle, for they were among the foremost citizens, and of a quarrelsome arrogant constitution, on some particular provocation filled the streets of Florence with the confusion of arms. The clatter of skirmishing swords was heard on every hand, with the outcry of attacking and attacked. The prudent fortified themselves in their houses. In these days more than others must be felt as a great hardship the lack of a strong man in the house. Violante and Tita, scared to the bottom of their quaking souls, looked from the case-

ment in turns through a small hole bored in the shutter, and thought to swoon at the clang of a sword on the stones. They had posted old Dominic by the barred and bolted door with a halberd and a dagger, but did not stint to show the contempt they felt for his martial capacity.

It was under these circumstances, after three nights spent without closing an eye, that Monna Tita said to Monna Violante, -

"In such a manner, my dearest mistress, it is impossible to proceed. All the saints in heaven will bear witness to my good understanding, when I say that where no one makes provision for him it becomes a person's duty to provide for himself. Now your good husband, my kinsman, of whom Heaven forbid I should say any hard thing whatsoever, did nothing less than to provide for an emergency such as this one. Did he take the precaution to leave you in charge of his family, except as represented by me, who am but a feeble woman?

He did not, for he expected to be absent but for a short period. So it happens that unless you wish to return to your own family, which I know you would sooner die than do, you must remain exposed to inconveniences and dangers such as we are now experiencing. Under these conditions, it is my opinion that we apply to some member of your husband's family, and place ourselves under his protection until Ser Gianni's return; for it is well known that women are not fit to advise about serious practical matters alone. They have not
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sufficient experience or courage, though in some other qualities they are superior to men."
"What is it your opinion that we shall do, then? To whom shall we apply?"
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"I have thought the matter carefully over, and find nothing so proper to be done as that we send to Ser Pellegrino, your husband's kinsman, very distant, it is true, but undeniably tied to us by the name, which is Bacci; and the Bacci, every one knows, are all Altemura. The reason why I would seek him rather than a nearer connection, such as our Ser Gianni's uncle, is the great respect which I have always had for his character, and the good repute he stands in with all. Also, his temper and person are such that with difficulty could any report arise which should do a wrong to your husband's name. Ser Gianni sent me to his house once to borrow a lute; you will remember, no doubt, the occasion, when the musician Cirillo broke his on the fool Nuto's head, and the serenade could not proceed. He came in person to speak with me; and when I said that I was of the same blood, he laughed, and called me cousin. No one in the whole city, it is my opinion, will be so fit to advise with when we are perplexed, and to help us with measures for our safety in days like these. The devil take the Orsini, one and all! At Ave Maria, if all seems quiet, I will send Domenico to summon him to us."
All was quiet at Ave Maria; the commotion had for some time been tapering off, and the danger

seemed past.
The blinders were one by one being removed from the fearful eyes of the houses, and the timid were venturing forth with the delicate reticence of a snail's horns. Violante, creeping up to the loggia to water her plants, which she found half dead for thirst, took a long breath at the changed appearance of things. The bridges were at last cleared of men-of-arms; there were peaceful

boats again on the river; and under the pomegranate-tree in the garden, little larger than a well, which she could overlook, had returned the lovers she had been watching for a month with the liveliest sympathy.

At Tita's call, full of excitement at the entrance into her life at last of something new, she descended rapidly. There in the sala she saw for the first time Ser Pellegrino of the Bacci, who had responded to Domenico's appeal in the name of his mistress, by following him into her presence at once. And what saw she? A man somewhat past his first youth, and of a plain exterior; well-shaped without being graceful; tolerably well-featured without being prepossessing. His hair and beard were scant; his cheek was of a melancholy, uniform color; his nose long, his forehead high, his eyes small, though, truth to tell, of an expression so benignant as to considerably advance his chances of pleasing. His manner, with all this, was so full of courtesy that no one in the world could have been possessed of one more suited to make a woman feel secure and free in his company.

And what saw he? A woman in the very blossom of life, for scarcely yet had Violante reached. her eighteenth year; his inquiring glance was returned by one from two eyes soft and bright as a bird's. There smiled to him the most amiable mouth that had ever been seen. He thought almost to be looking upon some child, for she was of a low stature, and wore her hair simple; her manner, however, when she spoke, never losing consciousness of her state, betrayed that she was a woman, and a married one.

She thanked him very civilly for the trouble he had taken, expressed her terrors and the need they were constantly in of advice.

To all he made reply as beseemed a perfect cavalier; and when they parted, it seemed to Violante she felt in him as complete confidence as she had ever felt in any one known from her childhood.

As Tita was helping her to bed, Violante said, who had been several minutes pensive, "Tita, this Ser Pellegrino of yours is the plainest man I ever saw with these two eyes; and it astonishes me almost that I should think so, for Heaven knows it is long since I saw a man. But I feel merrier than I have felt in many months, which shows how much it is against nature for a woman to live like a hermit, bottling up all her feelings and thoughts. It was an excellent inspiration of yours, and I foresee we shall have much pleasure as well as profit from it; for Ser Pellegrino inquiring what he could do for our service, I begged he would come again

to-morrow, and report to us on the state of the city."
On the morrow, in consequence, Ser Pellegrino came, and was soon so domesticated in that house that scarcely a day passed without his seeking it. Tita, after having said for a time to such neighbors as showed any curiosity that he was a cousin of hers, had come to believe it absolutely, and received his visits as no more than the duty of a considerate relative; as a fact, she held them addressed to herself rather than to Violante.
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Ser Pellegrino de' Bacci, though a man of restricted fortune, mixed in many companies; supped sometimes a modest guest, no doubt, and more listening than speaking with poets and philosophers; had admission with the favored to see in certain cloister how the famous fresco was coming. on. When a stranger of distinction arrived in the city, he was likely to be among those deputed to receive him at the gate, and assist in making Florentine civility prized. At tourneys he not unfrequently occupied one of the seats of honor among the arbiters. All of which would be difficult to explain, since he had neither wealth, nor a position of importance, nor any talent sufficient to raise him above the multitude. One must infer that his manner made supposed in him some peculiar merit, and his modesty inclined men of intelligence to do him courtesy.
These advantages which he enjoyed one will clearly see must make him more than commonly

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valuable to the sequestered women. And no one could have been more willing than he to make anything depending on himself of benefit to them. Besides his almost daily concern to visit them with the news and the hearsay of the town, and lay himself at their disposal for any little service he might render, he had soon put Violante in relations with his sister-in-law, a widow of condition, a lady of great dignity, under whose protection and his escort she could enjoy sometimes a little excursion for pleasure in the country, or a walk, or a dinner at the house of this same Onesta de' Bacci. He had a very particular gift for singing, though a voice of not great compass or power; finding Violante passionate for music, he brought to her house his lute, and there let it remain, to enable him to sing whenever she required him. He endeavored as well to teach her, for the greater alleviating of her tedium when he was absent. Nor did his politeness stop there; he made her the object of frequent gifts of

the perishable sort that create no obligation, fruit and flowers, and copies of verses by the dicitori then in fashion.

Violante, you may be sure, did not remain insensible to so many attentions. It was like Paradise to her after this long fasting to have some one new to talk to about herself and Gianni, as well as to have some one interested in her looks, whether she was paler to-day than yesterday, how this flower became her; and in her moods, why was she gay to-day like a bird on the bough, while yesterday she had

moped like a bird in the cage? Because she had dreamed last night that Gianni was returning, Ser Pellegrino. No more, no less!

So all went well between them for a long time. He gave her no occasion to find the shadow of fault with him, but on the contrary to depend on him more and more. She conducted herself at last toward him with as much freedom as a niece toward her uncle; yet it cannot be said that she ever lost sight of the fact that a man so plain must think her a very pretty woman, and this may have been the reason that, though of an age to be his niece, she treated him sometimes as a superior rather, making light of the things he said, teasing, mocking, calling him familiarly Bacci. To all of which he took no exception, but appeared to find her as charming in her impertinences as in her civility.

So the time approached in which again Gianni was expected. Violante could hardly hold herself in one place; she babbled from morning until night, and found no more satisfactory listener than Pellegrino. Her Gianni, he must know, was an angel, - beautiful as an angel, good as an angel. It seemed to her a thousand years until she saw him,- in truth, she saw not the hour to greet him! This slie said on a Monday; on Tuesday, when Pellegrino came as usual to present his compliments, and inquire how she had reposed, he heard her voice before entering, even as he came up the stairs. He was startled at the tone of it, and, forgetting all discretion, rushed forward at once, to assist, calm, or console.

He found her standing in the midst of curious ruins, fragments of parchment torn to the size of snowflakes, tatters of crimson silk, and gold-pieces scattered all about the floor. These she spurned with her foot, still plucking angrily at what was left of a crimson purse she held, to reduce it to the minutest shreds. At the same time, Tita trying

vainly to quiet her, she lamented aloud, with eyes that gave out in turns fire and water. She turned to Pellegrino as he entered, and continued to him, in that high broken voice that had been smiting on his heart, and driving the color from his face as he hurried to the scene, "You come in a good time, cavalier, to look upon the most ill-used of all the women upon this earth! He is not coming, that brave husband! Figure to yourself, he has taken himself at this point into the Chinese Empire, — from which I never hope to see him back. And he sends me gold to appease me. But this is how I treat it, -there and there and there!" She stamped her little feet in a frenzy on the laughing pieces that glanced satirically bright, "And when he comes, in the very same way will I do to him. I will say -
witness me all the saints!
-you have
done without me so long, now I can do without you. I intend to throw everything in this house that belongs to him out of the window into the river. He shall be taught! And I that prayed for him half the night, and, to make perfectly sure his return this time, burnt a candle in every church of the city, a candle of two pounds! who dreamed

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of him constantly, and shut myself up like a nun, without one pleasure, yes, without one little bit of comfort! Not a soul to see! Not a thing to do! Not a minute's happiness since he departed, that tiger thirsty for blood! But he, no doubt, has had many lady-loves since he left me, oh, I make not the slightest question of it. But Gianni," and suddenly she dropped on her knees, seizing her dishevelled little head, and sobbing, "Gianni Altemura, do you wish to see me die? Surely, if you still delay, you will find when you come nothing but a grave, a cold and neglected grave!"
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Now was Pellegrino's time to administer consolation, now that her great indignation was making place for grief. He approached her, and in soft tones, while Tita on all fours recovered the ducats, that had rolled in every direction, applied himself to fortifying her with good words.
At last the storm of her grief was spent, and at his representations, as well as the call of her own heart, she returned to her husband something of her former esteem and affection. "But never again," she declared, "shall I be the innocent fool that I have been. I will expect him as we do the grace of God, which will come in its own good time, and we enjoy ourselves meanwhile as best we may."

This mood, however, was of short duration, and soon everything seemed as it had been before, with the exception that in mentioning Gianni, as never a day passed without her doing a score of times,

she assumed the tone of one ill-used and forgiving, and in referring to their life together seemed speaking of a thing a hundred years past, or a fable altogether. Also, from that time she seemed less a child; or if a child, one with a grievance and a heart's-grief for toys. Since the news of Gianni's pilgrimage to the Chinese Empire, she made more drain than ever on Pellegrino for sympathy, requiring him to be sad when she was melancholy, as well as merry when she was in the humor, to the point that, being but human, he must not be too severely condemned for what I am about to relate.
At the end of a day of great heat, they had gone up into the loggia to enjoy the evening air, Violante, Tita, and Pellegrino. The last of the sunset was fading over the housetops; the yellow river washed calmly by the base of the house; the noises of the city came very faint, bells and wheels, barking dogs and cries of belated venders. There was a haze in the air and a smell of the settling dust of day.
Violante watered her plants, and graciously plucked Pellegrino a flower the like of which she tucked in her own hair. Then, as the darkness was falling, being of a dreamy mood, she begged him to entertain her with some of those melodies of which he knew so many and appropriate to every humor.
He, in instant sympathy, fetched the instrument, and while she leaned back with closed eyes, played and sang those tunes that inclined the heart to the sweetest meditation. Tita, seeing the two so well occupied, and rightly supposing that she would not

be missed for a few moments, went below to expedite some household affair.
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Ser Pellegrino, thinking Violante had fallen.
asleep, let his music dwindle off in a sigh. At once she sat up. "How sad I feel to-night!" she said, stretching out her arms. "It is on this sort of night, warm and still, always I feel most bereaved and lonesome. Who knows where is Gianni? Among the Chinese people! Are they pretty? The women, I mean.
But who knows anything about it, when it is so far! No, Gianni, no, Gianni mine, you should not have left me!"
"Shall I sing any more?" asked Pellegrino, softly.
66 No more. It is time to go in. Another night, then another day! Then another night, then another day! and so on, until the saints take pity on us.

Dear Bacci, look a little over the edge into the garden, if the lovers are there to-night."
"Willingly.
I think I see something white,
which might be her vesture; but the tree more than
half hides them."
Blessed be they, who do not find the time so
long! Well, a very happy night to you, Bacci; it
is time to go down. I hope sincerely that I shall
sleep, for all day I have felt the heaviest weight
you can imagine on my heart, like a tombstone.
Ask Tita; she will tell you I have scarcely spoken
four words to her since I rose. Wait a moment
before we go down, till I have seen for myself
whether the white is a woman's vesture."
She leaned over the wall, between the flower-pots,

and stabbed the pomegranate-tree with piercing
glances. She caught a vague shimmer of white,
that even as she gazed stirred.
"
"It is!" she exclaimed with unaccountable emotion; "it is! Oh, you cannot imagine what an
impression it makes on me! I think it is myself.
We used to meet like that in the garden, he and I,
without any one ever suspecting it. But I did not
go in white; on the contrary, all wrapped in a black
mantle; and as there was no door I could open to
him, for my father had had it walled up when
female children were born to him, he used to climb
over the wall. Sainted Virgin in Paradise, can it
be that such things are forgotten and despised?"
and unexpectedly she laid her face in her hands and
wept.
Ser Pellegrino, full of concern, tried to stop her;
and, in his distress scarcely knowing what he was
about, did in simplicity as one child does with
another he tried to take her hands from her face,
as if by that means he were making it impossible
for her to cry on. He possessed himself of one
hand, and seeing that she had already so adjusted
the other over both eyes that she could conveniently
continue to weep, in despair he began kissing the
hand he held.
As first it scarcely seemed she noticed this; and
he had leisure to plant a dozen kisses the most
respectfully adoring on palm and wrist, when of a
sudden his prize was snatched from him. Violante
started two yards away, and, still trembling with

her sobs, cried in a surprising voice of extremest ire,
"What is it that you are doing? Who is this in
whom I have so trusted, who turns on me like a
serpent? Of you, Ser Pellegrino, I would not have
believed it! What do you think of me, — what, I

ask? Ah, Gianni, well I said that you delay too long! Go from my house, abominable man, and never, no, never, presume to enter it again!"

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It would be difficult at this to picture Ser Pellegrino's confusion and anguish. Suffice it to say that he did not close his eyes that night, and on the morning in great doubt and trepidation despatched Filina, the ancient woman who kept his house, and who had often before carried messages from him to Violante, and her to him, to the house of the lady with a billet of the most humble character, imploring her indulgence to the extent at least of granting him an interview with her, to the end that he might offer the apology he thought her due.

After waiting a time in wretched suspense, he received an answer such as he had for some hours been instructing himself not to hope for, and instantly took himself to the house he had left the night before with such a tortured spirit.

Violante received him with an altered manner. Everything in her appearance pointed to one conclusion. She had clothed herself in the sombrest, least attractive of her robes; she had put no flower, nor ribbon, nor silver arrow in her hair. Her expression was cold and haughty; she folded her

little hands precisely at her waist; but her eyes. could in no manner disguise the much weeping they had recently been employed in.

Pellegrino advanced a step or two with a pale and scared face, pathetic if not ridiculous in one of his age.

Violante said in a hateful little hard voice that did not seem her own, "I would not have allowed you to come, but that Filina, for whom I nourish a true regard, employed herself with me in your favor, as if your life, to say nothing of your welfare, had depended upon my answer. It is true that Tita is at this moment not in the house, having gone to make provision for the day's dinner, for it is necessary that one shall eat, even in these degenerate times of disloyalty and feigning. But I warn you. that Domenico is at a distance whence I have but to call to bring him running at once to my side."

At these cruel words, Ser Pellegrino, paler than ever, and with eyes as near tears as her own, put out his remonstrating hands, and his knees bending under him as if the strength were gone out of them, said, "Let me say what I must, my dearest lady, kneeling before you as before the image of a saint. For certain it is, that as highly as any saint in heaven I do revere you, and I think in a calm moment reviewing all the past you will convince yourself that my actions have in the sum gone to prove what I say. For the want of command I showed

last night over the impulse of my heart, I blame myself to a point that never, never can you reach,

though you persist in carrying out your threat to never let me enjoy again the honor of your society, and spend the rest of your life in thinking ill of me. It was shamefully done indeed. It was a grave abuse of the confidence, frank as a child's, that you had placed in me, and that up to that very moment it had been my pride to deserve. But you will be doing me a wrong, my dearest, dearest lady, guilty as I own myself to have been, if you attach to my action a thought that was not in my mind. It related, true as that God lives, to no possible apprehended or suspected-how shall I say it?-imperfection in yourself that I could have calculated upon as likely to render you indulgent to such a liberty as I took. I acted without reflection. Has one not been moved sometimes to lay his cheek to that of a rose in the garden, remaining unable to say why? If you cannot admit that I acted unreflectingly, truly I shall be suffering an injustice; but if you can admit it, the rigor of your proceeding, you must own, becomes a little excessive and disproportionate to my fault. And of the fact that I may reasonably urge my absence of afterthought on that occasion, you must convince yourself by examining into the circumstances as well of the one of us as of the other. What am I, madonna, and what are you? No vanity can ever blind me to the point of concealing from me that Nature, who framed you so amiable, and so richly apportioned you, never meant - since it has always been seen that like seeks like that there should be between us any equal

correspondence of admiration and affection. You are in the bud of life, so to speak, as a rose is when scarcely yet the eye can tell will it prove a crimson one or a white; whilst I have reached already, as a poet says, the middle part in the road of life. You are so beautiful as it is impossible to be more so; I, to say the least, am not. And much as I would desire to possess them, I know that I have not those qualities of the intellect and the spirit that could make the defects of my person, the misfortune of my years, and the modicity of my fortune, forgotten. Of all the precious dowers of the mind, the only one I can justly lay claim to is a great appreciation of the beautiful and good, which, as you must see, is precisely the one of all to make me most humble. So you must part with the idea that in giving expression to an affection my heart was so full of as to be unable to contain it, I was so bold as to hope for any exchange. Deign to credit that!"

As there was silence when he stopped, and the lady had turned away from him, presenting in her back an obdurate, unmoved appearance, he pursued sadly, "If you continue to desire it, it is certain I must cease in these visits which have been a source of the greatest consolation to me; for I desire you to believe that your happiness has always been, and must continue to be, my first concern. Yet, could you remit to me this single offence, what gratitude should I prove! It would at once become my study to deserve well, and never again obtrude this love

which is yet so natural a thing, and blameless, you will agree, so long as it knows its place under your feet, and keeps it in silence. It disgusts me greatly with myself that a sentiment which properly pertains to the soul, and is shared by the angels, should have sought expression as it did, weakly in kisses. But that shall not be again. In my youth, madonna, through the agency of her family and mine, was promised me a damsel of whom, having seen her sometimes at Mass or in the street, I had long dreamed night and day, imagining to find in her the happiness every man, in his youth at least, has dreamed of attaining. But when the betrothal was to take place, and I was presented to her, she, seeing me for the first time, showed in her face a repugnance so unmistakable that I retired on the instant, or rather shrank away from her sight, giving I know not what excuse for setting her free. That beautiful and gentle girl took away forever all my courage with women. Yet I more than most men, I believe, could have found contentment in the peaceful affections of home. Why do I tell you this, madonna, but to strengthen further my argument that my failure in respect to you can nowise be laid to a base calculation, and to incline you to be clement to a man never before rich, and, in losing you, a beggar

"Pellegrino mine," cried Violante, turning to him with a streaming face, and, running to him, she thrust both little hands impulsively against his lips, "I forgive you everything! And God forgive

me for having been so hard. I am a wicked woman; and you kind to me as the archangel Gabriel, when I would certainly have perished had you taken no thought of me! And for a few paltry kisses I treat you like a dog. Oh, forgive me, and carry away no bad remembrance of me in your heart!"

Never were they better friends than just after the patching up of this quarrel. There is little to tell of the years that followed but that the two continued in an excellent understanding.

Now almost seven years had passed since the

departure from Florence of Gianni Altemura the merchant. Five times had his wife been disappointed in her hopes of his return; and of the cruelty of this he must have become at last sensible, for when he wrote again of returning, it was found he had accomplished already the greater part of the voyage, and was at no great distance from the point of his destination.

I leave you to imagine the jubilee held in Violante's house and in her breast. All the events of seven years before were brought so near they seemed to have happened but yesterday, while the interim was shrunken to insignificance. Her husband's last kiss seemed still burning on her lips; her arms ached and yearned to clasp him, and were stretched out for him in the empty air. The house was turned upside down to sweep and garnish for his return.

In all this confusion arrived the courtly Pellegrino; he looked blankly at the seats piled one on

top of the other in a corner, and the windows wide, and water running all over the stone floor.

"Gianni is coming!" almost screamed to him Violante. "There is no mistake this time. Yet go, my dear friend, and have a consecrated candle in every chapel or church! Let it be one of three pounds, since he comes home rich as a Saladin !"

When he returned from executing her commission, strangely moved as he was, infected with her joy, yet in uncertainty as to his own feelings, she received him in a manner more composed. Her whole face shone, yet exhibited, too, some little signs of embarrassment as she drew him into the window-place over the river, and spoke to him in the following manner: "Always, I know, my dear Bacci, my happiness has been with you the first consideration. And in response to this kindness of yours, you know that I do not fail to nourish for you the tenderest gratitude, which you may remain assured will cease only with my life. In consequence of these feelings which we mutually harbor, I make bold to offer you a prayer, which is, that at the first return of my husband you absent yourself for a while. You will no doubt see, as clearly as I see, why this should be a desirable course to pursue. Though you are his kinsman, it is not to an important degree, and I think you have never more than seen one another in passing, which is the reason why it will be difficult to explain to him, at the first, the intimacy in which we live. Gradually I will make all things
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clear to him, and on your return

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in half a year
Far
You may
or a year, which you will employ in an agreeable
manner, I trust, travelling-you will be received
by us as being his friend as much as mine.
is it from me to wish you at a distance from any
other reason than this one I mention.
read in my breast as through glass. Yet if this did
not seem sufficient to you, dear Bacci, still gratify
me in my desire, though even you should look on
it as a whim. No, you will refuse nothing to
Violante on a day so happy and so blessed, that
comes in answer to a thousand prayers
""
Ser Pellegrino, whose eyes had been fixed on the
beloved face while she spoke, did not answer at
once, in such painful quantity did he feel his blood
return upon his heart. With such a mournful eye
did he contemplate her, and for such a lengthened
space of time, that she in spite of herself withdrew
her eyes from his, and looked down on her hands.
The happy red faded somewhat in her cheek; yet it
was easy to see that this momentary embarrassment
passed, and her point gained, she would be ready
to frisk as a young kid, such furious joy rode on
her galloping heart.
At last Ser Pellegrino found his voice, and in
this manner expressed himself: "You said very
truly, madonna, that your happiness must always
be my first object. Your commands I must of
necessity obey, having no veritable claim to urge,
by reason of which I could hope for your favorable
forbearance toward a mere sentiment of my heart,

however profound and dear. Yet, that you should
not pursue a course with an appreciation of only one
of its faces, I will beg of you to observe that while
my actual presence in this house can only offer
light difficulties, necessitating but a trifling expla-
nation, from the moment of my personality becom-
ing known to your husband, my withdrawal from
it on the very eve of his return might offer grave
ones. He cannot fail to learn of my visits to you,
and will be justified in saying, 'What? Does he
leave even as I arrive? Has he then anything to
fear from me?' The reasons, as you see, are all for
my remaining, and it cannot be that you deceive
yourself in that respect. Yet, madonna, I see, I
clearly see, that you wish me gone. You are even
now casting about in your graceful little head for
something further to say in support of your desire
that I should go,—I know the signs of your face
so well! Yes, in all these years it would be sur-
prising if I had not learned to know you very well.

Believe it, I make myself no illusion. But what need of a reason for my going is there, in fine, when you wish me gone? It is your happiness which I am in all pledged to seek, which for five years demanded that I should be constantly at hand, and now demands that I should altogether go. Violante, my dear lady, I do not make you one little reproach. I do not ask you to consider how this separation must affect me. I do not complain that you do not know me well enough to trust me to be discreet, and neither in any manner

give your husband umbrage, nor yet curtail your pleasures with him by my inopportune presence. I only ask that when the time of my absence has seemed to you fittingly long, you call me back from exile, and let me enjoy once more the benefit of your presence. Even the restored love of Gianni cannot forever take up all of your time, so that there is not a fraction left for quiet friendship. Be all as you wish! And God, who sees our hearts, take pity on us all, these for their sinning, those for their suffering. So be it, I say! In deference to your wish, I will this very day sell a little portion of land I have still from my father, to enable me to meet the expenses of travel; then in company with certain gentlemen of my acquaintance who are on the verge of departure, I will go to Venice, where in favor of some service rendered by me once to that State, I can hope to be attached to some embassy, which will take me for a period more or less long far from these walls enclosing you. Farewell, madonna and God preserve you in health and happiness! You see that I do not shed one tear. None the less in your prayers remember me as you do those that suffer some bereavement."
With that he was gone. And all that day, with his head in a dazed condition, his heart numb as a creature that has received a heavy blow, he busied himself with his affairs, transacting for the sale of his land as one in a dream. At evening, when he would naturally have gone to see his mistress, and take his leave of her, he felt such

a weakness in his spirit that he feared rather than desired her presence. He knew he could do nothing if he saw her face while in that mood, but fall at her feet, and conjure her not to destroy him. He sent her, in a basket, roses red and white, by the hand of his faithful Filina, who was to detail to her his preparations for departure, and report to him to the smallest circumstance how she looked and acted.
After a bad night, very early in the morning he

rose to go outside the city walls to visit with its possible purchaser the orchard he desired to sell. As he approached the gate of Saint Gallo, his eye was arrested by a party of mounted men just entering it. They appeared strangers and merchants. They were talking aloud together, and seemed in gay spirits, as men reaching happily the end of a long journey. Some subtle influence informed Pellegrino instantly that Gianni Altemura was among these. He stared at them searchingly; he turned to look after them. He fixed upon Gianni, a bronzed, bearded, comely man, who sat solidly on his horse, and had the fearless way of looking about him of one who knows he can buy anything he sees.

Pellegrino walked on, his heart turned to water. All that day he employed himself mechanically in his affairs, concluded his bargains, ordered his house, and left it in the care of Filina, who took an affecting farewell of him, and agreed by means of certain scrivener to give him news periodically of Violante

and herself. For convenience he was to spend his last night at the inn that lodged the Venetians in whose company he was to ride, as well as the newly acquired beast that was to carry him. Much as a good night's rest before the wearisome journey was necessary, he could not find it in himself to retire. As the hour for departure drew nearer, he became more and more restless, and averse to the thought of the narrow inn-room that awaited him. He sought the point from which, looking across the river, he could see her house. He thought, perhaps, to catch the stirring of figures in the loggia, but either that the night was too dark, or that none were there, he was disappointed. The only light was in Tita's window. They were tired with the exciting day, no doubt, and had gone early to rest. He had heard from many mouths since morning of Altemura's return with untold sums and gems. His arrival made a stir among the merchants.

What harm if he crossed the bridge, and went to look at the windows on the other side, too, and speak a last blessing over the threshold ever dear? His feet, before he was well aware, had taken the familiar road, and he was soon within door, when he saw it open,
and a muffled figure slip forth. His heart leaped, and then stood still. He could never be mistaken; it was herself.
a few yards of her
-
Without casting a glance in any direction, she hurried toward the bridge he had just passed. He

let her get so far ahead of him that he could follow unobserved, for full of wonderment as he was, he did not forget that he was practically already gone from the city in obedience to her command, and that she could not but be incensed to see him again now that the new order was begun.
It was late, and the dark by-streets she took were deserted and still. She seemed in her hurry to feel no fear. What was his astonishment to find that the road she chose was precisely the one that led to his dwelling?
Having arrived in front of it, he saw her look up at the shuttered, unilluminated windows. After a curious emphatic gesture in the air, she began battering on the door with the iron ring that hung from the lion's mouth. She stopped a moment to listen, and as all was still began beating again. After what seemed to him a very long time, a light appeared in the little window over the door, and Filina's cracked voice asked, "Who is it?"
-
"It is I, the Violante, - alone. Come down and open to me, for the love of all the saints !"
Pellegrino could conceive nothing what this meant, but held still that prudence demanded he should not show himself, only be ready to protect, or assist, as should be necessary. For never, he knew thus much very well, would Violante be coming alone to his house by night, if she were not assured he was absent.
After the grinding of a key and the shuffling of bolts, the small door cut in the large one opened,

and Violante, pushing in, flung herself on Filina's neck before the crone had had time to set down the lamp or push to the door. Just beyond this, half hidden by the pillar with the ring to tie the horses, stood Ser Pellegrino, and listened.
"Is he gone?" asked Violante, impetuously; "is he gone
?"
-
"The signorino? But yes! But yes, many hours ago -
99
'Oimè! then all is in vain!" she cried, releasing Filina to wring her hands. "God has punished me. Yes, for the hardness of my heart He has sent me this.
Would I were in my grave! But soon I shall be!"
"What grieves you so, nina, little heart of mine? Is it possible he has not come even this time, that husband of yours? Ah, it is ill done in him, to the point of deserving hell."

"No! You are mistaken! He has come. Fi-
lina Violante here flung her arms around the
old woman's neck again, and sobbed on her breast,
pouring forth her grief in a rapid stream, "He has
come, but he is changed to me; and I to him,
one would think. We are not the same as once!
It is not the same!
say to one another,
--
We scarcely know what to
we force ourselves to speak.
He is like a stranger; he does not even look the
saine, he has a great beard, and his skin is
almost black, and he is grown thick. And I can
see that he does not think I am the same either;
he hardly said once how pretty I am, while he used
-

-
morning till night.
loved since me,
He pays no atten-
expects me to wait
-
to be singing on that key from
Who knows how many he has
one in every port, no doubt!
tion to what I say or do, but
on him, it would appear, like a servant wench
without wages. This very morning, - imagine it!
—after being just reunited, he left me to go and
see some merchants with whom he made a pretext
to have business. And this evening the first
evening, Filina!— he is gone out cheerfully again
with scarcely an apology, on some very urgent
affair in connection with the Greek intagli he
brought. And he presented meme, Filina!—
with a robe of azure silk he brought from Persia.
Pale azure to me, with this complexion, these eyes!
It is too much! Where where is Pellegrino ?
I want him back! It is he only loves me, - it is
him I love! All this day how I have missed him,-
what lonesome hours, my God! I see now that
always I have loved him, but because he was at
my feet I could not know it. If he were here,
would I not cast myself in his arins, saying, 'Take
me, hide me away, never let me go back to that
other, who does not know how to deserve me, that
stranger, that money-maker, that merchant! Ah,
Pellegrino, Pellegrino, with that sad face always so
full of affection, that voice of solicitude! No one
cares now what I suffer. How he looked at me
in parting! It cuts me like a knife to remember;
it burns me like fire. If I could only at least beg
his pardon. I was so blind to the state of my
-

-
heart-try to figure to yourself, Filina, a being so benighted! that I wanted him to go, that daily companion for five years, merely so that he would not be in our way! I grudged him, in what I thought to be my new happiness, even the poor little offices of gratitude which I could not in decency be withholding after a devotion so long. Filina, I cannot, I will not go home again, to have that other come in the middle of the night and take quietly as a matter of course to find me waiting. Let me stay here in hiding, while he wonders a little bit; and to-morrow we will send after Pellegrino mine, or I will follow him under a disguise,- I will follow him over the earth on my knees. Filina, he is the only one in all the world worthy of a woman's love. I dedicate mine to him henceforth, and God use me as I shall be tender to him!"
Ser Pellegrino in the shadow heard this, yet did not stir. He was trembling in all his limbs, and the tears ran down his face like rain.
He felt a curious relief, something as death must be after great pain, when he heard footsteps, a panting like an old dog's, and recognized Tita, approaching as fast as her legs would bring her. She passed without seeing him, and ducked under the low door. He heard a great outburst of voices, and ran down the street, out of the way of all sounds.
Not until three years had passed, did Pellegrino return.

At his first meeting with Violante it seemed to him he saw what is seldom given mortal man to see, a dream come true; one dreamed on that last night while he stood in concealment, and fought the good fight. She came toward him leading by the hand a sturdy little boy who could just walk, followed by a balia with a rosy infant in arms. Her face was peaceful and plump, her laugh from the heart. Her brown eye, if it did at times take on a look of wifely jealousy and petty concern for the family, was of those that sleep well and light up easily with smiles. Her conversation turned constantly on Gianni and the children. All as he had foreseen.

1

THE WANDERERS.

TH
THE WANDERERS.
HE darkness dropped early from the accumu-

lated clouds.
Two wanderers in a strange land stopped a
moment in the road to consult.
"I smell rain,” said one, an old man.
-
"Yes. It will rain to-night," said the other,-
a young woman, and looked up at the blacken-
ing sky.
-
"Is any shelter in sight, daughter? Any house?
Do you see a light anywhere?"
"No light. We have left the city far behind.
We have not passed a dwelling since the dog
attacked us. There is a little hill with patches of
darkness near the top that should be groves. We
can go there. We must leave the road to reach it,
and cross rough harvest-fields. Ha!"
"What is it, daughter?"
"Even as I spoke, a light shone, far ahead."
"Does it move? Is it a torch somebody carries ?"
"It is steady, like a fire kindled in a house,
showing through the window. Let us go toward it."
"Is it a light from the interior of a dwelling,
Naarah?" asked the old man, as they got nearer.

*
-
"Yes. I can see the house now, a little house;
and the red firelight and smoke through the
window."
66
66
I smell food cooking."
Surely not yet; we are too far
--
""
"But I smell food. Fish, I should say, baked on
a stone. Before we go in, my child, it is best to
look through the window what sort of folk they be.”
Soon they came to the dwelling, backed against
the rising ground, with but two windows visible,
and an open door approached by stone steps climb-
ing in a curve. Above the roof was discerned still
another roof, a trellis supported by rough stakes,
and heavily burdened with vine-leaves.
"Wait here," whispered the woman to the elder,
and ensconced him in the hollow of the stairway.
Then she crept up, her bare feet making no noise,
and peered in.
The little room was red with dancing firelight;
everything appeared to dance with the fire but the
copper pot that hung directly over it, steaming and
bubbling. The contents of this a plump, youngish
woman, whose hair was all hidden in a white linen,
stirred with a long-handled implement; her other
arm was taken up with holding a naked brown baby.
A little girl stood by her, teasing to be allowed to

stir; two small children, near naked, too, played on the floor with what appeared to be a litter of dogs. A darkly sunburnt man sat on a rude stool, as far out of the heat as the chamber allowed, and with a pruning-knife hacked at a piece of wood, await-

ing supper. The air was full of a pleasant homely odor, and the clatter of childish voices.

The stranger outside studied the faces of the older people; they were kindly foolish faces, little removed from the soil. She crept down, and reported to the elder. She gave him her shoulder to lean upon, and side by side they mounted the stairs, his staff clicking, his sandals shuffling on every step.

The entire rural family turned to the door at the sound; the wife left her stirring; only the fierce little pups continued with their snarling and struggling.

In the doorway stood the strangers; from some distant land the inmates of the house judged instantly, by the unfamiliar cast of their features. The old man, a great tall figure, bowed with years, was clothed in a dark tunic reaching near to his feet; a traveller's cloak hung over his shoulder, not wrapping him, for the day had been warm. His head was bare; his hair and beard, silvery white, mixed on his breast. He held his face lifted, as if looking intently upward, but his eyes were closed; the look on his face, notwithstanding this, was of one who saw. The woman was clothed nearly as he, but she had no shoon; her black hair covered her forehead and ears, and was tied in a tail back of the neck, tied with a withy such as they use to fasten a vine to a stake. Her dark eyes looked, they, fit to see far and near, to look steadily, if need were, in the sun; her level black eyebrows

had the effect of the hand one holds across the eyelids to see the better from under it. When, with a movement habitual to her, she pushed aside her heavy hair, her forehead showed broad like a bullock's and white as a star. Her features were sad, as were the old man's; but with a sadness becoming exiles, unfretful and large, brothered with fortitude.

The woman begged shelter for the night, and food,

- a little anxiously, spying their thoughts in the faces of the master and mistress of the hut. She spoke their language, but not as they spoke it.

""

"Be ye travellers? asked the mother. The little girl stood at her side; one of the smaller children peeped from the folds of her gown.

"Yea, travellers," said the old man.
"Beggars!" said his daughter.
""
-
""
man of the house,
Since a god once
Look, mother! The old man he is blind!"
whispered the little girl. "Why is he blind? And
he has blood on his hair. Why does the lady speak
like that? I can't understand what she says -
"You shall stay," said the
"and eat and sleep with us.
wandered on earth and tended
we take in all beggars that have any majesty -"
And he laughed at his joke, and put out his hand
to the old man's beard; and the others laughed,
though they understood nothing what the good-
natured rustic meant.
sheep, as they say,
So the strangers entered, and while the children
all watched them, the blind man's daughter, with

her hostess's permission, filled an earthen dish with
water, and having made the old man sit on the
stone seat built in the interior wall, washed his
dusty feet; then sat resting at his side, both in
the shadiest corner, out of the way of the busy.
Her tired face relaxed with well-being; she watched
the scene before her with dreamy eyes.
The mother had gone back to minding her
supper; the father had taken his smallest boy
astride his knee, and was giving him a playful
lesson in the art of self-defence with the doubled
fist. The little maid had been given the baby to
hold. She came toward the stranger-woman now,
with friendly round eyes. "He is my brother,"
she said. "His name is little Kriton.
He is very
strong for his age. He is almost always a good
boy, but sometimes he kicks and screeches."
I
May I take him in my arms?" asked the
woman, offering her hands to receive him.
should like to hold him in my arms.
little, how warm and fat!"
-
Oh, how
The little girl had given up the baby, and was
watching to see that he was properly held, before
she turned to fetch something further for the guest's
entertainment.
The woman pressed the little creature to her, and
kissed it, now on its head, now on its breast; now
she took both little feet and kissed the rosy soles of
them, laughing with fondness.
"Is it a young child, Naarah?" asked the old father.

"6
Oh, a dear little one!" she said.

He put out his hands, feeling for it, and, having found the downy head, placed both hands upon it a moment. His daughter looked at him with a curious anxiety. His lips moved, but made no sound; she appeared to feel relief at this last circumstance.
"This," said the small maiden, who now had brought one of the toddling gaunt beasts that played on the floor, "is not a dog. Be careful! It bites. But its teeth are little. It is a wolf's baby. They are all wolf's babies. My brother got them. Not that brother! A big boy, and very strong. He can do anything."
"Where is your big brother now, little sister?"
"What do you say? Where? Oh, he will be coming home to supper.
before. His name is Cleobis.
He
ought to have come
He can kill even a
Then I will let you
wolf. Do you like the baby?
hold him a little longer; but you must be careful. Oh, he puts out his lip! He is going to scream! Give him to me. He does n't like you. Don't you see? Your hair frightens him. Why don't you fasten it back with a white fillet, like mother on a holiday —"
"Where can Cleobis be?" asked the mother, turning to inquire of all at once. "The meat is ready; and where is Cleobis?"
"I will beat that boy," said the father, with a total absence of ill-humor, "for never being where he belongs. He goes to the city and finds a pack of youngsters who teach him little good. A fine

job, when I have to do all the pruning by myself, as to-day, and he every bit as able to work as a grown man."
"Let him alone. Did n't he kill a wolf the other day, and you have the fell for a coat yourself ? We will eat without him, and I will save a little in the bottom of the pot."
Then she filled the dishes, and had out cups and a narrow-mouthed jar stopped with a wad of vine-leaves; and gave each a portion of food and a little measure of bitter wine and water.
-
The rustic before drinking poured a few drops from the fulness of his cup before a small smoke-defiled image near the hearth, an image with face of goodly favor, and freshly garlanded. The same

did his wife and the one child old enough to do as she was taught. So did not the strangers, and the man cast on them a glance of question.
The woman was helping her father with his pottage, leading his hand when it groped for the cup, picking up what he dropped. The wife tried to converse a little with them; never sure of being properly understood, she repeated everything several times. She told her little ones' ailments, the consequences of last year's drought, the hopes of this year's harvest. She told how Cleobis killed the she-wolf and stole the young.
The stranger seemed to feel interest in these homely details; she asked the children's ages, and put intelligent questions concerning many a little domestic event.
14

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THE WANDERERS.
All was eaten and drunken at last, and a silence of satisfaction fell on the company. Then the old man rose, and, spreading out his hands and lifting his face to the rafters, invoked one whom he named Father in Heaven, and called down a blessing.
Simple curiosity showed in the faces of the hosts. Naarah, a vague look of alarm, a patient shadow of sadness in her face, followed her father's movements with her eyes, making no sign of interference.
-
"Listen, good people," said the old man, when he had ceased praying; "you have taken me in, and kindly entreated. I for your charity will repay you with an inestimable treasure, even life eternal. You, too, shall inherit your share of the truth, no less than the chosen of the Lord. Listen." A flush mounted to his gray cheek; his blind eyes opened toward heaven, their whites quivering; his aged voice found strength and a solemn sweetness. "Who should be better able to tell you than I, that saw him with these eyes? It is of the Son of God I am speaking, of our Saviour, Christ Jesus. Him ye have heard tell of, no doubt, but have not believed, -for ye spoke a while ago believingly of a wandering god in disguise tending sheep: the same, I mistrust, that vied in song with a mortal shepherd, and for jealousy flayed him. The sheep of the God I declare unto you are men. The hour is come when ye shall believe on him, and be his sheep; for I, that knew them that were eye-witnesses, will set forth before you, judging, all things as they truly happened, - will relate the miracles this Good One
-

THE WANDERERS.
211
-
for fear of harm to
A heavy woman

did, who, greatest wonder of all, rose from the tomb after lying three days in the sleep of death. But first I will tell you my earliest cause of love to him, then each matter in its order, that ye may remain enlightened and persuaded. I was a little child, even like him of yours I laid my hands on erewhile, when he was a preacher in Israel, a disturber of the peace, said they, a mad prophet. A high-born lady was my mother, rich and proud, who did not believe on him, more than her kin. Me, her first-born, she loved as her life, and I was sickly. Always she bore me in her arms
me, my breath came so feebly.
was she. One day sees she a gathering in the Inarket-place: the mad Galilean it is, and his disciples surrounding him. On the outskirts of the crowd are women with infants they are bringing to be touched by him, for he is reputed to heal. A sudden longing, a sudden hope, a sudden illumination, seize my mother. She mixes with the common women; she presses forward with the others. They cannot reach him; the disciples rebuke them and shut them out. Then comes his voice to their ears, disproving his disciples: 'Suffer little children to come unto me,' he says, the Holy One of God, 'and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' And me he held in his hands; even me he blessed and breathed upon." The old man paused a moment, his eloquent hands outstretched; one would have thought his sightless eyes were beholding that he spoke of. "Now that ye have heard my conse-

cration," he pursued, " will I go on to tell you why it is fit that Him ye should worship and none other. For ye worship ye know not what, but we know what we worship, and salvation is ours. Oh, turn from your idols of stone-
"Stranger," spoke the hind now, authoritatively, and Naarah looked toward him in deprecation, enough! Respect our gods. The harvest will be good this year, and I hear no word against them. I have heard of your sect. It is much that I do not cast ye both out of my dwelling. Say no more, then, for I would more willingly not be harsh. The rain will be falling to-night."
"My brother" spoke the old man, and was saying other words, when attention was drawn from him by a shout out in the night, and an approaching voice of mingled singing and laughter.
"Cleobis!" said the mother, and after listening, He brings some one with him.”
Young feet stormed up the steps, and a slim strong lad dashed in, followed by another lad, of his own age, but a different station. The tunic of this latter was whole, though much soiled, and of fine cloth; his sandals had silver furnishings.
"It is my friend Lychas I bring home," said

Cleobis presenting him to his mother; "you have heard me speak of Lychas-oh, yes, him whose uncle is the Flamen Martialis. He wanted to see my little wolves. Look, Lychas, here they are. Didn't I tell you they might be taken for dogs? Beware their teeth. But the mother! You should

have seen her! Father, where is the she-wolf's skin, that I may show Lychas. You will see now that I told you the truth, Lychas, and the arrow hit her exactly in the eye-as I meant it to!". His wide-awake black eye caught sight of the strangers.
"Oh!" he cried, pointing at them, and his eye danced with excitement, as when he unearthed some new species of game, the Christians!
-
66
""
"Know ye them?" asked the rustic, a shade of alarm in his good-natured face.
"Ho! Know we them? Lychas, look! He asks do we know them? They were in the city this noon, the old vagabond beggar prating down our gods; and we and other boys threw stones. I aimed at his nut, and see the red spot!"
66
-
"For shame, child!" cried the old man, and his daughter clung to him in dismay, to keep him quiet.
"Say you shame to me, graybeard," called out the stripling, advancing with a challenging swagger, "and in my own house?"
"A shame,
66
-
yes, Cleobis," spoke his mother, quietingly, a shame in any case to strike one so old."
"But you do not know these Christians, mother. They are the most wicked and impious in the world, and it is a meritorious act to hunt them down. How came they here? Ye are much to blame. If your uncle knew of them, Lychas, would he not send the soldiers to tie them, and they should off

to prison? He hates a Christian, does your uncle, as it were the smell of a dead mole."
66
They are going," said the rustic; "I did not, as the gods hear me, know in the least that they were Christians. They came like beggars, weary and hungry, and I let them in, in honor of the gods that preside over the hospitable hearth. You

will not tell your uncle, young master, will you,
that your companion's parents harbor Christians,
seeing that it was all done in ignorance? For how
should I know they were Christians? Is it in
their faces? No! So get ye gone, propagators
of impiety; this is no place for you, among the
godly and law-abiding."
"Get ye gone, and quickly, do ye hear?"
cried Cleobis, hemming them in urgently, with his
hunter's instinct.
"Oh, come, father!" cried Naarah, and dragged
at his hand, trying in her fright to make him go
faster than he would, lest Cleobis should do some-
thing to him before they could reach the door.
When she had got him beyond, protected from any
missile by the wall, she turned in the doorway a
moment. Her dark eye blazed; her face looked
wrathy and white in its
stretched her hand toward
"You! you unnatural dog!
grow up to tear you to pieces, and lap up your
blood, while you are still enough alive to feel their
tongues! The others I thank; God requite them
the good, forgive the evil!"
-
frame of ebon. She
Cleobis, who laughed.
May your little wolves

She withdrew quickly, to avoid the onset of
Cleobis, who, missing her, and hampered by his
sister's clutch on his tunic, stood in the doorway,
yelling after them in the darkness, as if he had
been goading oxen.
""
'Naarah, Naarah," expostulated the old man, as
his daughter dragged him along, "a bitter curse!
It is not meet, my child, nay, it is not meet.
To shake the dust from our feet is all that we may
do."
She did not answer. They hurried on till the
light had dwindled to the single brilliant spot it
had been when first Naarah saw it; then, getting
her bearings from the outlines of the hills, she
turned from the road toward the patches of dark-
ness on the hillside she had taken to be groves.
Neither spoke, the old man wrapped in his dream,
the woman silent because her breast was in a
tumult, and she feared her anguish and impatience
would pierce through her words in a reproach.
- -
"The rain!" said the old man, 'softly, feeling a
drop on his hair; and he put out his hand to catch
another. "Good! for the earth was thirsty, and
needed it. I knew it was parched, by the
smell."

"Can you come a little faster, father? I cannot
have you drenched, and no fire to dry you by. Wait
till I draw your cloak over your head. If you can
hasten your step a little now, we shall get to the
trees before the downpour."
"So fast as I can, my daughter,
-
so fast as I

can, I come.
This will be to the good man's field
a benefit, for he said that the drought would ruin
the green things. How freshly it smells already!
and the fine falling sound is sweet to the ear.
it stopped so soon? A brief shower, that will
hardly do any good to the green things!"
Has
"We have come under the roof of the trees. A
little further in still, father. So! Here it is quite
dry, and the ground is soft."
"Sweet is the air. They should be cedar-trees
we stand under. Thick they must be, for not a
drop reaches me. Ah, good, good! I am very
weary, daughter. Let us pray and to sleep.
'Foxes have holes,' quoth He, 'and the birds of
the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not
where to lay his head.' Let us not murmur,
Naarah, my beloved child, even in our secret
hearts. No, murmur not thou."
He knelt, and she at his side; and in the wood-
land closet they prayed, he speaking aloud, she
making his words hers in silence.
-
Then she found a place where the trunk of a tree
was threefold and slanting, and having felt her
father laid in the most sheltered spot, wrapped
him in his cloak, and lay down near him to sleep.
Her mind was long haunted by angry memories
of the latter scene in the pagan's hut. Their venom
was at last exhausted. The past was as it was;
remained still the future to test. Imagination, as
ever, had wide scope let loose in the fields of the
future. There was a thing she loved to think of in
>

the darkness when all was still, before sleeping,
a face she called up with a tender dread. It suited
well with the hour of dreams and stillness, having
indeed first presented itself to her soul in a dream.
She thought of it now, until, forgetting every woe,
she slept; then she dreamed of it again.
She was awakened by the birds. She opened
her eyes to the cool first light of dawn. The
birds were singing madly. She listened awhile
without stirring. Their voices seemed to come

from above, below, every side; some still sleepy and small, others straining and garrulous. She tried to sleep again; to find her way back to unconsciousness of this sad world. No use! The comforting night was ended.

She rose softly; her father slept on.

She crept to the edge of the grove, and sat on the slope, hugging her mantle about her chilly shoulders, her feet in the wet grass.

The light of dawn, solemn and pure and inquisitive, made her think of Resurrection-day, when the poor soul, all exposed, is full of awe, yet full of the joyousness, too, of new beginnings. A great star in the East was beaming more brightly, it seemed, than ever in the night; it must conquer the invading day this once if never before, she thought ; when lo! she looked for it, it was nowhere to be seen, it had been drunken up.

The floating tatters of gray cloud caught a little faint fire in their edges; all the colors of the valley slowly reinstated themselves, fresher than they had last been seen in the dusty sunset: the grayness melted out of them; they shimmered with dew or rain.

Then the enchanted crystal light grew common; the golden glow waxed warmer over one hill than any other; from the very heart of the dead gold, shot a point of living gold. A breeze sprang up from that quarter, as if a shining sluice-gate had been thrown wide, and a river of air poured through.

Naarah hugged herself small, feeling cold and but half alive, ill at ease with a nameless, intimate suffering. Softly the sun warmed her, melted out of her too the torpor and shade of the night. She dropped her mantle, and sat basking luxuriously, looking off over the beautiful plain with eyes of love. The effect of her dreams was on her, softening, enervating.

She heard her father call, and went to him, and after prayers together, led him out to the edge of the grove, and begged him to tarry beside her a little before they moved on their wanderings, for here was the prospect so fair.

"I see nothing, my child," said the old man, wistfully looking off.

She took his hand in hers. "I will tell you, father; it is a valley, but extended, the proportions of a shallow cup; not grand, but so peaceful, so fair! A place one would love to think of as home. I can see a river that grows broader and broader as it approaches the opening in the hills.

There is a bridge by which the great road for the marching legions continues across the stream; the sunshine stretches rosy fingers through the arches, on the milky water-surface. I can see the roofs of houses dotting the plain, and near each, the amiable gardens and fields, that are like patches of rich color on a garment of sober hue, for a silvery gray clothes the main of what I see, with here and there the blackness of cedar and cypress trees. Far away is the city, like a handful of snow on a knoll by the bank of a river; the light kindles sparks in it. Quite near is the house that rejected us last night, set against a hill all vineyards. I see it so plainly even the red flowering pots in a line on the parapet of the roof. They have a tent of vine-leaves to sleep under, the rustics; they have melons and figs hanging from the green roof; and a spring quite near, I see doves drinking at it. Ha! The smoke begins to curl from the window; the wife is making food. Oh, father, father!"
"What is it, Naarah? Your voice makes me fear you will cry. What is it, beloved child?"

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Oh, father, must we go on always? Always wandering from place to place, always begging our daily bread, receiving injuries at every hand? You know that whither you go, I always will go; but must it be that we never abide in any place? Surely your duty is done. You have served till you are very old. I too, father, have served very long, have followed you from the beginning. Have I not fulfilled the duty of one already,
-
one woman at

least? God does not require everything of each, - He has made so many creatures! There are Christians gospelling all over the land now, and feeding the beasts, too, and filling the dungeons. Let us tarry a little. I will serve even as a slave in some rural household, perform the genial labor of the fields; willingly will I reap with the others, and gather in grapes, and press out the wine. We shall have a hut for ourselves that I will adorn; to you, dear father, I will make life sweet. Some reaper perhaps will come to be your son, and children be about your knees. Let yourself be cared for, father, be done good to! And me, let me have ease, too, and be but a woman like others. I am my mother's child; your mother's blood have I too in my veins. They wore fine raiment, and ate delicately and lived softly. Pity my mother in me a little, if you will not pity yourself. I ask but

to have what God gives the meanest, and not with
my own eyes to see you stoned at last in the
market-place!"
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He
The old man looked sadly ahead with wide, sight-
less eyes. Long she waited for his answer.
said nothing.
"Father! Oh, father!" cried Naarah, taking his
hands and shaking them. She was weeping. He
felt for her head with a trembling hand, and laid it
on his shoulder, stroking it like a soft black bird.
"The duty is not done, the whole service not
rendered," he said, "until this mortal life be over.
To me, child, the light came when darkness fell on

—
the eye of flesh. I knew what mighty force moved
me when I set forth on my pilgrimage. The others
knew not; your brethren forsook me, full of impa-
tience at what they were pleased to call my way-
wardness. You, out of filial love, without fully
understanding, or perhaps, I sometimes fear, car-
ing to understand, have followed my steps, min-
istering to me always like a tender angel. So do
to the end, my Naarah, to your own praise,- for it
is about our Father's business we both go, though
only I consciously, it would appear.
Be my
guide, my faithful minister, to the last, my Naarah,
and the great reward shall be yours even as mine,
Christ Jesus' smile, better than what we call
peace here below, better than the satisfaction of the
body, better even than that sweet satisfaction of
the soul I too have known and blessed, and that
you are yearning after, I perceive through all your
words, human love, as it is between men and
women. Lure of youth, my Naarah; illusion! Age
shall quell it, death shall slay it; another love is
the love we rise with out of the grave, transfigured.”
—
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—
Father and daughter were looking alike off over
the plain, he, the dark, dark expanse colored only
with the shadows of his brain, she, the unrolling
sunshiny solid green, the ethereal blue. The eyes
of both were crowded with sadness and tears. He
felt her faint shaking against him. "Is it an aim-
less wandering you have imagined us gone forth on,
my little one? Have we exposed ourselves, for the
mere joy of obtaining a title to the blessing prom-
›

ised those reviled for His sake, to stones and stripes,

the fate of fugitives and criminals? Have you not perceived how we follow a path? Do I not ever, when you inquire in doubt, direct you to the setting sun? Have we not, though by indirect ways, been coming ever westward from home? So it was fixed we should, in my mind, from the start. My goal lies westward; the earthly fruit of my pilgrimage shall be gathered there."

Naarah listened attentively; this was a new thought to her.

"What will you do in the west, father?" she inquired in wonder.

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"What has been the state of those converted by me to this day? They have been the ignorant and lowly, — slaves, artisans, a soldier here and there, spreading the faith indeed, but slowly, by ones. Before I die, it is set to me as a task to convert one that rules over many in an extreme province of the Occident, one in the wake of whose conversion will follow the conversion of vast numbers; for his mind dominates many, and much people follows his leading."

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"Who is this you speak of, father?"

"You will scarcely know the name, perhaps ; but pilgrims returning have given me repeatedly report of him for deeds of clemency, the fruit of elevated thinking. And once I am assured I saw his father, for the names correspond. At the burning of our temple it was, when he would not that they burn it, so was he filled with awe at its holy

beauty. I saw his face, a blank with wonder,— yet he could not save it."

"The name, you say?"

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"Marcus Æmilian, a philosopher, now proconsul in the furthest westward upper province. Toward him we steer, through many obstacles. For a great mind will accept the truth to better fruit among men than a limited one, and a man set in a high place, yea, a city set on a hill shall not be hid. His light will shine on a multitude. A truer disciple will he be than I, a broader disseminator of the Word, when the truth shall have shone upon him. And he is ready to receive it, sick of the outworn ancient lies, turned to philosophy for food to his hungry soul. Westward! I come, bearing the bread of life! Westward, my daughter, westward!" said the old man, rising to his feet with a light of inspiration on his face. "Go we westward!"

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So, over mountains, across valleys, they wandered; braving dangers, enduring great hardships with an unmurmuring constancy,—the hoary saint scattering

truth as a sower, the maiden suffering all things with him.
One evening, in the season when the nights grow cold, they found themselves in the streets of a rich sea-city, jostled by the passers, not knowing where they should lay their heads. They wandered about. the unknown streets, choosing ever the quietest. This soon brought them to the suburb. Here they

could hear the wash of the sea against the stone sea-wall; they passed between dark rows of gardens. Naarah could distinguish the white villae-with their graceful porticos and colonnades, set among thickets of laurel and oleander. Her father's weight grew more on her arm as they thrid the lanes. He went with head bowed, as if he slept in walking, and frequently stumbled. Naarah cast anxious glances toward him, and, seeing a light not far, made for that.
"Where do we go?" asked the father, roused by the change in their direction.
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"There is a fire in an open court at the back of a house of various buildings that fronts on the sea, amid vast gardens; gathered about this fire, what would seem to be the servants of the house. They are warming themselves and talking, some sitting on their heels, others standing by, who perhaps are the household slaves of neighboring families, come to exchange the reports of the hour. They will allow us to warm our numbed hands and feet, no doubt; and perhaps one will be found among them to direct us to a place where we may be in cover for the night."
"I smell cooking. Are they not roasting nuts, daughter?"
"I think they are. Yes; I can see a woman peel-ing something. She throws the shells in the fire, and eats”
They came near the gathering about the fire. All eyes were turned upon them, inquiring. Even while

Naarah was humbly begging that the old man might be allowed to sit among them within the range of the warmth, she felt her gown pulled, and, turning, saw an undergrown female slave greeting her with sisterly eyes.
"Ye be Christians," she whispered, and indicated with her head the old man's tall staff, near to the top of which he lately with a withy had affixed a short cross-piece that converted it into a symbol.
"So be I!"
She led them by the hand into the circle of the firelight, made them sit, and gave them a generous share of the chestnuts.

Naarah saw her father eat. Very weary he appeared; he nodded in the firelight, and almost slept between the mouthfuls. The slave sat beside Naarah on a fagot, and talked in an undertone, her voice covered from the others by their own loud talk, — telling how she was converted from Paganism, unfolding her circumstances, describing her mistress, the rich, widowed Vipsania, promising all she could for her good brethren's comfort and accommodation that night.

Naarah, weary to the soul, while listening looked at the faces of the others, to forecast what the chances were to-night, when her father should presently declare his faith. One, on the opposite side of the fire, more than the others filled her with apprehension, a gladiator, a freedman, by his speech, she thought, with a fierce, bright face, like Cleobis grown to a man. He made brazen jests, and laughed

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at them freely himself, and the others with him; he bit into the nuts with flashing teeth. Naarah looked with dismay to the moment of her father lifting his voice to exhort that man.

But time went; the company diminished to a mere half dozen, the fire burned low, the gladiator took his leave, and his rough singing died away in the night, and the old man had spoken nothing.

"Come, father!" said Naarah at last, shaking him gently from his doze, "let us go to rest. This kind soul God has placed in our path offers us a little chamber in her mistress's house, and she herself will share the bed of another girl for the night. Speak a blessing on her, father, for her devotion."

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What? what?" asked the old man, rousing himself. "Yes! A blessing on a good heart. The merciful shall obtain mercy. There are chestnuts in bagfuls under the reading-desk in the synagogue, and the little gray mice find them-

been dreaming, dreaming."

-

Ah, I have

They got him to the chamber, little larger than a tomb in the wall, that opened by a low door on to a covered colonnade, and had no other opening for light or air but this door. The slave left them a little lamp and withdrew,

Naarah saw her father laid down for sleep, put out the light, and soon slept. But she had been accustomed so often to sleep in the open air that she could soon not suffer the closeness. She rose to open the door, and stood a moment breathing the

good air in relief. When she turned back, she dimly discerned the old man risen, sitting. "Why have you risen, father? Why do you not sleep?" she asked.
"Sleep? Is it still the night? I thought it was time to rise and be on our way to the Emilian. We must hurry, daughter. Suppose that he died before we reached him?"
66
To-morrow, father. But now will still long be night. We must sleep and get strength."
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"Ah, yes, sleep." But still he did not lie. down; he sat as if musing, or, she thought, perhaps dropping asleep in that posture.
She laid her head against his shoulder, to coax him to lie down and let himself be covered, that she, too, might sleep in peace. Feeling her head, he pressed it against him, then with both hands. groped lovingly over it.
66
Oh, my Naarah," he exclaimed in an accent of surprise and pain, "you are grown thin! Or do I mistake? No! Where are your full young cheeks I felt last!"
"That was long ago, father. Why should my cheeks be round, now? I am no longer young, - you know it."
"Not round, but fair, fair you must be, beloved, - your mother was so fair! And you, in your early standing before me, a
bloom as I remember you,
slim young maid, but full of dignity, with laughing lustrous eyes, and such a forehead! like a star in a storm-cloud."

"I am not fair, father. How could that be? But once I was, surely, or else all lied to me, the faces of streams as well as men.”
He mused awhile in silence, then spoke solemnly, but there was a sort of anguish in his tone. Youth and beauty, the chances of mortal happiness, fulfil-ment of woman's desires, - poor beautiful, frail blossoms, all, all have you laid upon an altar; all have you given to God!"
At that her tears rose from her heart to her eyes. "Not to God!" she murmured rebelliously; "to you, my father!"
But in pity for him she said it
so low that he heard but a stifled sigh.
He lay down again at last, and she; and they slept, but she was disturbed now and then by his mumbling. She woke enough to listen; he seemed dreaming of things long past: the burning of the temple, he cried out to save it! Then he called by name, fondly, a dog, whose death he had told her had been one of his earliest boyish griefs.

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He was quiet at last; or else she slept so pro-
foundly she heard no more.
She woke for cold, and remembered the door left
open. He, too, must have felt the cold. She
stretched out her arm to feel if he were covered.
Her hand met his, flung out on the floor. Yes, he
was cold-oh, how cold! too cold! She lifted
herself anxiously to touch his body. Then a shriek
rent the silence of the black night, reckless, insane,
overtopping, followed by another and another, mixed
at last with desperate bewailings.

There was an increasing shuffle outside in the
colonnade. In the low doorway was first to ap-
pear a lady pale as wax, carrying a little jewelled
lamp that shook in her hand. What is it?
what is it?" she asked, holding the light up over
her head. "Ha! who are you?" Behind her
now peered several of the frightened, half-naked
servants.
"He is dead!" cried the girl, casting her arms,
over her father's body.
“Who are they?" asked the lady, shivering in
her thin silk night-weeds.
The Christian slave threw herself on her knees
before her. "It was I, noble Vipsania, gave them
a lodging for the night, knowing how charitable
you are, not willing to importune you on so small a
question."
The bereaved girl was wringing her hands, call-
ing on her father. A groan escaped Vipsania in
sympathy. "The physician!" she cried, "quick!
and wine, and a hot brazier!" She knelt by the
orphan, weeping aloud, she too, and trying with
her to restore the cold dead man; between their
vain efforts, turning to bestow on the heart-broken,
demented girl unconsidered caresses and consola-
tion.
Now the season had returned when the slaves
built no fire at night to warm their chilled hands
by, but, sitting under the low-hanging stars, lent ear
for the voice of the nightingale.

In the cool of the morning, sat two women on
the seaward terrace to Vipsania's house. The
black and white marble of the pavement had been
sprinkled and strewn with rose-leaves, and the great
awning stretched overhead; between its drooping
edge and the polished steps leading down to the
garden, glimmered the purple-blue sea under the
paler purple-blue sky, glowed the rose-red oleander
flowers 'mid the dark green of their foliage, filling
the air with a faint almond smell.

One of the women lay on a couch, and a child fanned her, constantly changing the fan from one little hand to the other, as in turn they wearied; the other woman sat near, and busied herself with the small loom before her, a shuttle, and strands of colored silk.
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Leave your silly work awhile, Neera," said the reclining lady, older than her companion, darker of skin, less beautiful and more richly dressed, in weeds of such thin texture they would scarcely be a burden even on this warm day.
Leave your
silly diligence, and bring your seat nearer, and talk to me. Thou canst go, Luculellus. Go, remember to feed the crimson-crested green bird, and mind thou pull not his tail, for I shall hear of it, he can talk as well as I, - and forget not the crumbs to the goldfish, and that Phryne shall teach thee the rest of thy song. Go, little one.
— -
"Now, Neera mine, come near and talk with me. How it rejoices me to see your face so luminous with health! Idol of my eyes, how beautiful you are,—

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and you have majesty, too, in your movements, like a queen. Neera, oh, my Neera, why tears in your eyes? What has been done to grieve you?"
The one who in these days heard herself called always Neera, knelt by her friend, and laid her head against her breast, her tears wetting it silently.
"Is it still for your father, my poor Neera?"
"Nay, he is at rest where he would be. He sees God. A bad daughter would wish him back.
"It is nothing," she said after a moment, and looked up, smiling through tears. "Sometimes even so early as when I rise, my heart is full, and is tortured sweetly with a desire to weep, I know not why. Then every beautiful thing I see seems to press on it, and bring it nearer to the point of tears that shall relieve it. This sea, this sky to-day, -all so soft, so fair!-those flowers, have oppressed me with their sweetness since my rising. Then that child with his little half-learned song- A word of love was all needed to make my swollen heart over-flow. Ah, dearest Vipsania, noblest, how have I deserved so much of you?" and she buried her face on the friendly shoulder, and wept sweetly.
"How?" said Vipsania, near weeping too, “but the benefactress are you, my dove! I needed you more than ever you me. A lonely widow, her only son following the wars; surrounded by false flat-terers, feeling herself all the while unloved. When on that terrible night I first saw you, I knew your worth but to look in your face, knew I had met a

true.
true heart, and was determined from that hour to keep you at my side. My sweet Neera, nothing shall part us. My life has been a different life since your coming. It is as if I had found a child. I have found a beginning of peace to my soul, too, for now at night I think on your God, and try to pray to Him. His story moves me deeply,
But when I am startled, or in sudden earnest, always before I think, I have called on Venus or Mars. But, my Neera, despair not of me; in secret your God shall be mine, for I have an intelligence to understand all you say to me concerning such things, believe me. Are your tears dry now?"
-
"Ah, why are you so like a mother to me, unworthy? So like a mother!"
Vipsania laughed softly, lifted the other woman's beautiful black head between her hands, parted the cloud of hair off the starlike brow, and looked in her eyes, her own eyes smiling. "Why? Can you not in the least divine? Not in the very, very least? Is it not possible you may one day be my beloved daughter indeed? My son will not be following the wars forever. He will return; and from his boyhood he loves all that I love."
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Oh, cease! cease!" gasped Neera, then laughed too, and softly laid her face again on Vipsania's breast.
After a time spent in mutual caresses, in playfulness and foolish feminine talk, Naarah went back to her seat, and took her loom; but instead of working looked off on the sea, her idle arms on her

knees. Again her eyes suggested tears of sweet sadness lurking in their depths.
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It seems like the fulfilment of a dream," she said at last, dreamily. "Always in those hard days of wandering I used to think of a time when I should live at rest, like this, have the fate of common women. It was all I asked, — little household tasks to fulfil, things about me to love and tend. I was never heroic! I was made for love, I think; and from the earliest days when I might be called a woman, a future was foreshadowed to me in which I should be wrapped in great love,-belong to it, possess it. In every place I would have wished to stop, and wait for it to find me,— a foolish, wicked thing in a barefoot wanderer, with duties too that forbade it, to foster such a dream. Yet so strong was it on me that in a vision of the night once, in deep sleep, even the face of the one

whom I should most love among all men was seen clearly by me, so clearly that I should know it again. -Ha! here comes Luculellus. Hast learned the little song, cherry-lips? He weeps! What ails him? Oh, the poor small finger, nipped cruelly by the green bird! There, little man; Neera will make it well. She will smear honey on the bad place, then into the mouth it goes! Then honey, then into the mouth!"
When she had restored the little boy to serenity, she held him hushed on her lap, and looked off over the sea again, forgetting him. "Of what favor is your son, Vipsania?" she inquired absently.

But Vipsania laughed teasingly, and refused to tell; whereupon Naarah brought her eyes back from the distance, and turned in confusion to see why her patroness laughed.
Youth was returned to Naarah's face; a beautiful commingling took place in her cheek of the tints of the lily and the rose, soft and melting, yet as if subject always to the chaste unmingled white of her brow, the severe night of her hair. With peace and hope to be her sun and dew, she bloomed as does a rose.
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But one day it was the day after her cure of Luculellus' finger- when Vipsania looked on her, her bloom seemed arrested; her head drooped; her cheek was faded.
Vipsania questioned her solicitously, but got no proper reply, had no satisfying reason given her for her friend's evident depression.
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In a few days it passed; and Vipsania, after rejoicing, was forgetting the very circumstance of her Neera's sadness, when again one morning she perceived the old cloud on her brow, this time heavier, darker. Neera would assign no credible cause to it; she said she had bad dreams, but would not relate them. She tried to shake off her mood when Vipsania urged her; but whenever she ceased speaking, Vipsania saw that she brooded; and her meditation, reflected in her face, seemed characterized as clearly by anger as by grief. This cloud was longer dispelling than the first,—

indeed, never seemed to pass entirely; a thin sadness overmisted Naarah's best spirits, and only when she forgot herself was she cheerful and untroubled as once. Vipsania felt sure of seeing that remnant soon evaporate, when one morning, upon the arrival of a mounted post with letters, sending for Neera to communicate joyful news, she saw the girl enter her presence not as she had

naturally looked to see her, in the garments of her usual wearing, but clothed in the raiment of her wandering days. Her feet were bare; in her hand. was her father's staff, his mantle hung over her shoulder.
Vipsania looked at her in utter amazement.
Naarah looked back in Vipsania's face with loving eyes all stained with tears shed in the night, heavy with tears still to shed.
"What is the meaning of this?" asked Vipsania, and the tablets dropped from her unnerved hands.
"I should think it a jest but for your eyes. Oh, look not so!"
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""
I am leaving you!" broke out Naarah.
Leaving me, my child! and my Marcellus, my son, coming home but to-morrow; and all my hopes- But what has happened? Oh, why put such a test to a heart so sincerely loving as to mine. to you?-for, by Juno, this can be but a jest!"
""
'No jest!" said Naarah; "I go. I am forced to go! Listen, Vipsania, and oh, pity me, and say not one harsh word, or my heart will burst. Let me speak without weeping if it be possible, for I need

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all my strength. That I love you, you can never doubt; that every kindness of yours to me was valued for the love it came from, never, never, you can doubt. I thought my troubles had found an end. I thought that after so much suffering and toil I was entitled to a little rest even upon this earth. I took the finding of you for an actual recompense, figure that! Oh, I would have followed my father to the end of the world, yes, till I dropped like an old horse in the traces; till they stoned me, or gave me up to the beasts, would I have followed him, and not once murmured. But when he died, I thought my mission accomplished. When my mourning for him was lessened, I took my ease with a free conscience, and looked to good days coming.
—
"Then, one night - I had fallen asleep happy; such a token of love had you given me that day as to wish me for your daughter indeed, you remember- That night comes to me in a dream my father. I did not see him clearly, but as if through a veil; his voice came through a veil from a great distance, yet I knew as one knows in a dream, yet knows not how he knows that it was my father.
was as if he put a finger into a wound I had not been aware of before, such a pain and creeping did his presence cause me. 'Wilt thou lie here at ease, and slumber with roses in thy soft couch,

Naarah?' he said, — and
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-
-
It
his voice was not as in
his days upon the earth I knew it, but with more
severity in its sadness, thou that wast wont for
-

What peace of
But now a heart
the love of God to sleep with a stone for thy
pillow? Remember the old days!
heart amid our outward trials!
ill at rest amid outward peace. Wilt thou be
dressed in queen's robes, and He for whose gar-
ments His murderers cast lots, held in scorn by the
heathen? Where is the Emilian?' he asked me
in a loud voice. Where is Marcus Emilian?' he
asked again, and his voice seemed fading away. 'Is
he dead?' I cried out in my dream, with a fright I
could not explain. 'Is he dead, and his soul lost?'
And I woke in a frozen sweat.
"
"The next day it would not out of my mind; a
sense of my father's reproach was on me, full of dis-
comfort. I knew not what to do. But I said, 'It
is but a dream! Have I not dreamed that I had
wings and flew? Have I not dreamed that Solomon
wedded me?' So in the course of days I forgot it,
and was contented again. And you gave me that
fair robe all gold-bordered at every hem, desiring
that I should wear it at your son's return, and my
gold necklet, and my fillet like the crescent moon.
So good were you to me! Does one forget such
things?
"Days went, and again in a dream my father
came to me. I saw him clearly this time, clear as
any living thing by light of day. He had the face
of those in glory; his robes were shining white.
My heart beat for joy when I looked on him; for,
oh, I saw that he saw! His sight had been given
back to him by God. I felt my tears coming for

He
And he
gladness. I tried to reach him, to kiss his hands
and feet; but as I drew nearer I was abashed.
was so changed, and I but still the same.
did not help me, or receive me fatherly, as he
would once have done. He looked at me with his
bright, recovered eyes, and said, 'Is it so thou ful-
fillest my mission to the Emilian? What I could
not finish, for the earthly instrument granted ine

was outworn with service, dost thou, with thy strong young body still belonging to thee, set aside as not worth doing?'
66
-
"Then I, because that I heard him, a soul in bliss, past all human circumstance of danger and distress, speaking so untenderly to me, still in the flesh, that every little thorn can make suffer exquisitely, that woes and doubts and bad dreams continually torment, and the fangs of wild beasts have still their good chance to tear, I felt anger surging in my breast, and I answered his voice of high reproach with a voice of still higher reproach, unfilial, abominable. Father,' I said, 'in thy life never did I refuse thee, never cross! Did not I trudge at thy side like a faithful dog, till my feet looked not like a woman's? Thou wast blind and sad; thou wast wont to call me thy only comfort. Thou hast something to remember, too, if it please thee! But now thou art in heaven; thou hast attained the end of all thy thoughts in life; thou sittest in the smile of the Saviour; thou seest, thou hast all thy powers back. Let me alone! Grudge me not a little good in this poor
-
--

life, now that I can do nothing more for thee. I will not move. No; I will not move! Depends the Lord solely on me, to save the soul He wants?' And I woke angry and stubborn, determined to still stand by that way of thinking. I tried then not to think any more of my father, who was changed altogether in my memory, made one with the glorious, estranged being of my vision.
-
-
"At last I was forgetting again, so do the days wash over the dreams we revive not by the will, till they are effaced. Last night my father came to me again, but so naturally I thought I was awake. I felt cold. I put out my hand, by habit, as in the old days, to feel if he were covered, and found him sitting up, near me. I saw him by I know not what light. He was old-old — old, blind as ever, and only changed from what I remember of him by being shrunken small in stature. His head shook a little as he sat brooding, not knowing if to the others it were night or day. I could see his pale, bald crown and the white hair spreading from it. I doubted not I saw himself in the very flesh, yet I was conscious too that he was dead; and a curious sadness and horror pertained to his presence. I seemed gone back somehow to the night before he died. I think we were in the same little chamber, yet it was not the same,

either. Father,' I said to him, do lie down and
go to sleep!' I thought he would not; and I found
he was crying softly, like an old man gone back to
childhood. Wilt thou not lead me any more,
(

Naarah? Then I must find the way alone. Seven
children in sons and daughters, and in my extreme
age not one to obey me! And Naarah, the youngest,
I loved the best of all; but not she loved me, or
respected my will, only so long as I lived — only
so long as I lived!'
—
"I thought my heart would break; my entrails
melted with pity. Vipsania, it was his very self as
he used to be, helpless and blind, and so loving, so
loving to me! I dreamed on, and in every dream
he stood like that, in his old torn gown, with his
blank, quenched eyes, his groping hands. Oh,
Vipsania, I must go! Never will the impression of
that dream grow less. The dumb beast driven at
the goad's point had best move on; you would not
have it stand and be done to death with pricks?
No, no; speak not you till I have done. Who
loses most, of us two? Is not my life at an end?
Is not my heart crushed out of me? Were I dying
indeed, as I am more than dying!
any favor
to alleviate my pain would in humanity be shown
me. Then pity me enough to not plead with me!
Your words will have no power to change my course,
but to break my heart, oh, power, - full power!
Show me no love, beloved; lavish on me no fond
detaining words; take not my head in your hands
to weep over, as by your motion you yearn already
to do. Let me go the beggar that I came, as if I
had tarried but a night; and for your silence and
forbearance I will bless you more, more, than I

could for your tears and kisses, - for already I
carry all the burden I can bear!"
Vipsania looked at her, frightfully pale, impressed
as a child might be with the necessity to obey,
for very doubt of what calamity would follow
on disobedience. Her eyes, fixed on Naarah's,
swelled even as the other's were swollen, and dark-
ened with tears repressed.
Where are you go-
ing?" she asked at last, with trembling mouth and
a breath of a voice.
"
"To seek that Marcus Æmilian of my father's
great solicitude."
-

-
"Neera, forgive me, dearest, but an unde-
fended woman -oh, it is insensate! No, I will
not make you weep, though I am slain, too; as a
helpless sheep I am sacrificed, and shall weep
my eyes blind when they behold you no more!
Neera, you shall take gold from me, to make easier
your way. No; I shall not suffer you to beg your
bread."
"Gold!" said Naarah, “it would not last me till
to-morrow. Are the roads so secure? You think
there are no robbers left? My best safety is to
have nothing, to be so lowly the lowest despises
me!"
"Oh," now cried out Vipsania, in a panic, and the
bond laid on her feelings seemed to have snapped,
"you will never, never come back! I shall see
you no more! I know it. They will stone you!
They will burn you at a street-corner! They will
throw you to the lions! Oh, my daughter! Mar-
16

cellus is coming; wait for him, then we will all
consult together, and determine on the wisest
course. Oh, my maiden, listen to me! Oh, I will
- I will-I will speak! No, not all the gods
united shall keep me from screaming out!" And
she rose dishevelled from her bed, the tablets
clattering on the marble floor, and, hindered by
her long gown, cast herself toward Naarah, by force
to detain her.
Naarah, whose face had grown fixed as a mask of
unrelenting and reproach, muttering rapid words of
Christian blessing, made a sign in the air toward
Vipsania's head, and even as the unhappy woman
was reaching her, turned and fled.
It was a weary, weary wanderer after many days
reached the city of Marcus Æmilian.
"What must be done, let me do quickly!" she
said, standing in espial before the outer wall of the
proconsul's palace; for she had a foreboding that
this was her utmost enterprise, that she should
meet an end here of wandering, and was eager
to be at rest. So, with a recklessness she had
learned since life lost all its sweet, she set about
procuring access to the proconsul.
Here, as once before,
And Fortune favored her.
she came in converse with a Christian slave, a do-
mestic in the palace, by following whose counsel
and accepting whose aid, she found herself in time.
established in the governor's house, among the female
slaves who spun.

She endured life there a day. One day of over-

hearing the petty detailing of scandalous report, one day of suffering the spites of those the next degree higher in the household rank, and she said, weary to the soul, "Let me make an end of it promptly."
—
Then, because she might wait long to get word with the proconsul, who was sad and studious, she learned, and seldom seen abroad since certain mel-ancholy ailing had seized upon his mind, or body, one could not judge which, she slipped like a thief into a high chamber whither he came at night to observe the movement of the stars. Here she concealed herself, behind the folds of the curtain that veiled the flight of steps leading to the roof.
-
She saw, as she waited, the polished marble of the steps reflect the darkening blueness of the sky; she imagined she saw at last watery gold points strewing it.
Now her attention sharpened. A voice had smitten her ear, and the sound of feet entering. Fine threads of light filtered through the texture that hid her; but, peer as she would, she could not see. Her heart beat. She heard the master dis-miss the servant, retreating steps. She heard the crackling of an unrolling scroll, a sigh, — and long, long, nothing more.
-
With noiseless feet she crept to the point where the curtains met, and parted them the width of an eye. His face was from her. He held to the light of a bronze lamp with several tongues the scroll he

studied. About his hair was still the chaplet of leaves of a feast; his garments were such as were worn at an official banquet, Tyrian purple and gold. She watched, her heart stopping with an un-reasonable emotion every time he moved, sonable, for had she not come to dare all? and should one resigned to die, start at a leaf in the road?
—
-unrea-
Now he laid down the scroll before him, and sat with his forehead in his hand.
What must be done, must be done. She stepped from the shadow, and stood, a slave in white, with black hair white-filleted.
He sighed from his deepest heart, and shifted his position, settling himself deeper in the carven chair; he extended his gold-sandalled feet, propped his head on the other hand, and reached out among his documents for further matter to read.
-
Then, she approaching still a little further, was revealed to her his face, a tired thinker's face above his warrior's body; strong and ardent, no

doubt, to meet the multitude, to lead the legions, but, in this hour of dropping every disguise in the study's solitude, sad and gentle.
He lifted his head at a rustle, and saw a white woman kneeling near, with great inspired eyes fixed shiningly upon his.
"Peace be with thee!" she said, in a low voice that thrilled the midnight air; "I come - bringing Christ!"
He looked at her a long minute, then said simply and without mockery, while a warmth overspread

his face, as it were, shame for his boyish eagerness surviving into maturity, -"If thou art not an angel, as I could believe, sent from the Christian's Paradise itself, thou shouldst be a Muse at the least, with august brow, come with words of high wisdom to me that grope unillumined amid the barren fields of learning, and find nothing nothing to satisfy me with. Angel or Muse, or mere fair woman, in a good hour thou comest, for I am like at this pass to listen to any word that carries but a promise to guide me at last to the light. Who sent thee?"
-
-
-
"God, I believe! Oh, great things hath the Lord done this night to His servants!" said the woman, whose face was radiant with a splendor impossible to describe; who never moved her great eyes from his, but approached softly over the floor without rising, till she could place her two hands on his knees, humbly as a servant, yet with assurance, as a mistress, "This was destined from the beginning. By this sign: That thee, to whom I come this night bringing the one whole truth; thee who art now claimed to inherit the faith that saves, to belong to Christ Jesus' flock, I knew long before ever I saw. Yes; I knew thy face. Thou wert shown to me long ago, —in a dream!"
- -

THE GARDEN DEADLY.

HE King, now so old and so inactive, had used often formerly in the pensive hour of the day to climb a certain eminence from which he could overlook the city of his pride. It was a rough and narrow path he climbed at first, followed perhaps by two in attendance.
Soon more accompanied him, curious to see what he saw to give him the exalted air he wore on de-

scending the trodden path became broader and smoother, and the points at which the company habitually turned for the view were flattened into a sort of natural terraces.
Then, persons wishing for sight of the King, having petitions to make, or curious wares. to proffer, resorted to this road, and waited for him in little groups along the way.
In time it was planted with more imposing flowers than had grown there wind-sown; the trees were trimmed to make a fair background to the statues of divinities under their round stone canopies; the stopping-places were paved fitly and furnished with marble parapets over which to leau with comfort, admiring the prospect.

-
Finally, on the top of the hill was built a house for the King, from which he could feed his eyes on the cherished vision at all hours without the necessity of steep travel, tedious to him, for already he was growing old. So well satisfied he seemed in this place, that he moved from it more and more rarely. At last, misfortune having made his gray head her mark, he came forth no more at all.
By degrees the cultured flowers ran wild; in some places they sprawled disorderly across the path. All that human hands had framed began to show signs of decay. The storm one night overthrew a goddess, and no one set her back on her pedestal she lay in the grass on her white side, her weight and the washing rains gradually delving her a cradle in the earth.
In the same way, something resembling ruin fell upon the city. The pleasant clatter of builders' hammers was suspended; no need for new roofs in a place that the enterprising, the ambitious, the resolute, were one by one abandoning, despairing of advantage henceforth under a king so null or so absorbed. There were streets of all empty dwellings in whose cavernous windows the birds of the air came to lodge; and not unfrequently even, among the furthest removed from the heart of the city, little prowling beasts that stole down from the neighboring hills.
They that would have delighted to pursue them and capture their skins, had taken their gallant bronze spears elsewhere: the little keen-eyed beasts became bold to trot through the

streets as soon as the light was gray. A girl, meeting one, stared transfixed at the wickedly gleeful sulphurous eyes shining on her below the uppricked ears, while she summoned strength to scream and flee; thereafter she would never go

forth to draw water after dark, nor would any of her companions. So the streets and the square with the fountain became very still even before the sunset's softly shaded scarf had been withdrawn from the sky's rim. The moon, rising, whitened spectrally over a deserted city.

Nobody cared extremely that it was so; those who cared, after struggling for a time against what seemed fated to be, removed themselves.

Now and then smouldered and broke out into a feeble flame a disorder having something the character of a revolt. It took the form, perhaps, of a dozen men,

some past their youth, the others still boys, climbing the King's walk in irregular hurried fashion, and beating clamorously at the palace portals.

The old gray minister tottered forth to them, with the look of a nurse at the sick-room door, and said, waving one hand warningly, and laying a finger of the other against his lips, "Hush! hush, children! Do not make so much noise. You I will disturb him."

So good, so generous a king he had been in his day, that they were ashamed, being at best a poor-spirited lot. They withdrew, laying up their activity against the time, surely not far, when, look-

ing up from the valley, they should perceive all the long-sealed doors wide open, people coming and going in commotion, the smoke of a sacrifice rising from the disused altar on the hill.

A sadness that was the memory of dread misfortunes, a sense of the futility of resistance to what was no doubt ordained by Who made the sun irresistibly to roll, a reflection of the mood prevailing in the hushed halls above, lay over the city as a cloud. Under it the weeds grew tall and taller, together with the embowering trees; sounds of toil and play grew rare; the livelier passions went out. Insensibly sadness had turned to mere somnolence.

The chamber, long and not very lofty, where the old King sat nodding in a chair of state, was open from wall to wall at one end; the masonry rose from the floor only so high as a man's knee. Across this long rectangle a curtain hung on gold rings. When toward evening this was pushed aside, the old King saw as a picture in its frame the once beloved city with the sunset burning over it. From that height it looked as of old, only a little more smothered in foliage. To eyes dimmed by age what they saw might still stand for an active, flourishing city: a small skiff made a spot on the river; leaning over its bow a little boy fished,—ah, yes! a mighty merchant in his barge, coming to make important exchange. Across the bridge a dozen goats were stringing, followed by the

shepherdess, so! the flower-tossing procession,
- - -

headed by the victorious wrestler or the chiefest
poet.
Above it all, floating across the airy depths of
pale gold unfathomable beyond the teeth of cypress
at the horizon, stretched sombre bars of purple,—
heavy monsters, half asleep, one after the other
touched with a slow anger that made them glow;
but it died out ineffectual, they cooled, and,
losing their purple color, lost interest for the eye,
were forgotten, gray shapes in a discolored sky.
-
The little sallow person
a very thin, old-look-
ing youth, or else a boyish-looking, elderly man —
who in a weary voice was reading to the King from
certain finger-worn tablets, had come to seat himself
on the parapet of the window to catch the latest
light. He glanced from the lines to the darkening
sky, then at the King, whose face was sunk in his
beard between the two long white bands of his
hair, and suspended his reading.
There was a long silence.
Then a gentle far-away voice came muffled through
the silver beard, "What now said the Queen Amal-
thea when the infant Polidorus took his first step?
Read that. So long ago!"
The reader looked disconsolately at the sky where
no more light was; without referring to the tablets,
he gave the oft-read account, like a lesson. His
voice came monotonous through the gloom :-
"In the doorway stood she whose honor it was
to be feet and hands to the royal nursling. She let
it down against her, and stooping held its hands,

steadying it, for the knees were little and unaccus-
tomed. Then the Queen Amalthea, the dove-eyed,
at three paces' distance knelt on the marble floor,
and opened the fairest arms that ever were out-
stretched; in one hand showed the fruit with golden
rind. From her lips, as from the turtle, came a
tender, cooing sound. Then the little child, the
after-day hero, laughed like sun on rippling water,
and put forth one rosy foot. The nurse released
the hands that struggled in hers as callow birds
in the nest, and swayed forward, breathless, with
arms ready to besiege. Majesty looked on; and the
stern breath used to command a host was held sus-
pended till the other rosy-cushioned foot came down.
Three times alternately the soft feet were lifted.
Then the golden prize was grasped. Cried the
Queen Amalthea aloud, as she caught the King's
hope quickly to her bosom and laughed amid tears,

'Thrice-blessed, thrice-blessed, thrice-blessed the
earth that feels thy little feet! Thrice-blessed
forevermore each place touched by thy shadow!'
she cried ringingly. My little hawk! My double-
rose! The sungold of my life! No thorn dare
pierce them, no nettle burn them! Swift conquer-
ing strides be theirs! Flowers kiss them, so-and
6
And the flower of her lips was laid against
them laughingly and weepingly."
The reader paused tentatively. No request was
made that he should proceed. He yawned wide and
silently, and leaned against the window-side, cutting
off by his dark outline a corner from the square of

twilight sky. There was silence but for the gold
rings clinking faintly as the wind blew in the cur-
tain. The tablets slipped from his knees. The
noise they made in falling was followed by a catch-
ing of the breath. The gentle voice through the
silver hair murmured, "Thrice-blessed, thrice-
blessed! So long ago... ." then gaining distinct-
ness said, "What now did the Queen Amalthea say
in the bitter last hour, when the cold had crept up
to her knees ?"
—-
This request seemed to the sleepy attendant too
much. Thousands of times he had rehearsed those
words, as indeed all that the tablets contained; they
made his small soul sick. He waited a space be-
fore obeying, looking hopefully for an indefinite
prolongation of the silence.
"What did you say that she said?" asked the
King, presently.
"I said that there is no light left in the skies.
That I cannot see the lines any more, O King."
"Ah, well, I know very well what she said. But
fetch a light, good servant. What steps are those?
What sound is that?" he queried, starting suddenly.
-
Soft-speaking, soft-treading, had been so long the
rule in these precincts that there was an agitating
strangeness about the voice echoing somewhere
beyond the door of the gloaming hall, a voice
propelled from a strong, unsubdued pair of lungs.
Both listened, the King half-risen from his chair,
his dark-veined hands curving clawlike over the
arm-rests.

Steps approached; the door opened. Dancing
lights flashed through it; a sallow brightness brought
to view the checkered marble underfoot, the carv-
ings proceeding in shadowy alignment around the
room near to the ceiling. The old King blinked.
The minister approached, and said with a novel

force in his tone, arising from the excitement of the unusual, "A stranger, there is a stranger asks to be taken in."

-

Now such a thing had not happened in many years.

The old King stared ahead, only half comprehending, nodding, confused. It was a wonder what he would do.

-

He touched his dim gold crown fumblingly, the light of its green and red stones had gone out long ago; he muttered unintelligibly to himself, patting down the folds of his robe. The muttering died away; a faint fire climbed to his cheekbones; his eye grew alive. He stood up suddenly, making himself almost straight. "Is it a king?" he asked, “a brother king come to visit me?"

-

The people looked at one another. Some said uncertainly, "Yes!" some, "No!"

The minister spoke: "I do not believe he is a king. Though his manner has some authority, yet his garb is poor; and his face is too prone to laughter. He is but a traveller, perchance a slayer of wild beasts; for his shape is large and his strength. considerable, if I judge by the weapon he carries, a burden for two men."

The King, who had lent attention with his face, but not heard, now commanded imperially, "Lead in to me this king, and prepare the banquet."

Stupefaction stole into all the faces but that of the King himself, who now returned to his seat with fullest dignity, and lifting his old hands, grown steady, settled the crown evenly over his long white locks.

"The banquet?" was the question in all the raised eyebrows.

There were gold and silver vessels displayed in quantity on the banquet-tables. They did not shine, they were sadly time-tarnished; but where the old. eyes saw dull spots of gray and yellow, memory set a rich glitter.

-

Many of the dishes remained covered; properly, for they contained nothing. In the others showed somewhat doubtfully things drawn in haste from the deep store-chambers, ancient luxuries whereof most of those looking on them had nigh forgotten the flavor. They were heaped lavishly, however, and made a satisfying array. Some glittered like crystals, some by their faint perfume reminded the palate of honey, some were but shrivelled dark objects fit to be examined before bitten. Of common household meats were few, as if these had been ashamed to appear; but baskets there were

of fruits with the night-dew still on them, as a servant had gathered them, groping in the dark among the branches.
17

The anxious minister now and then let his eye circle about the hall to judge if the effect of this swift sweeping and garnishing could be to produce on the unknowing eye a sense of daily custom. He doubted, he much feared. He put his trust finally in the unroving disposition of the guest's large eye, which limited itself for the moment to dwelling with cheerful steadiness on the wasp-bitten fruit or the disk of mealy substance whose turn should come next to be gathered into the white flashing smile, and ground to nothingness.
What a gay hunger he was possessed with, the stranger! What a long thirst!
The King and the higher members of the household were partaking with him of the feast; but theirs was another performance. The King now and then touched his cup with his hand, that was all, then turned again to his guest with fragmentary hospitable encouragements and the reflection of an old-time smile on the face that had come to life for a night. The minister nibbled a little on his two remaining teeth, like a curious goat, peering up directly after a moment's grudging attendance to his dish. The others ate with constraint and lack of zeal, more interested in watching the new-comer.
The little man of the tablets flooded his tired throat freely; but the wine could not bring to his leathern face the fine sunset flush it spread generously over the guest's.
Surrounded by this low-speaking, softly-moving crew, all pale with an effect of etiolation, all with

unglad eyes, most of them old and hollow of cheek, the guest looked very large, very solid, very capable, filled full with life and color to the twisted ends of his hair and beard.

He had a face of youth; a blue eye, deep, but without the least sadness, an eye that was wide with questions, and that yet seemed to have ready in itself a native answer to meet the answers to these. He laughed easily, and twice as easily smiled, as if from a superabundance of mere animal content. Though the muscles made a goodly show under his sun-bronzed skin, and his sinews when they leaped into view were as bowstrings, his amplness and the comfortable attitudes he fell into threw his effect of strength behind one of good-natured

laziness.
His garments were unusual; one would with difficulty have acquired similar ones in any market. His shoulders were hung with a hunter's trophies, not the common ones, skins of fawn or boar, but the dread sand-colored skins, mightily tufted with tawny black, that the timorous traveller having once spied through the tree-boles, has present ever after when his dreams are bad. Over his shoulder, across his breast and back, forming a support for the pouch on his thigh, was a band of curious dark texture; when the light fell on it aslant, the wrinkled surface gleamed in spots with a metallic green, a fiery blue. In a corner leaned the weapon referred to by the minister. True, it was large, but it looked harmless as the guest himself. It was but part of a

young tree, one end fashioned small enough for the grasp, the branches trimmed off not quite level with that they sprang from.
-
The guest spoke little at first, but with a boy's simplicity filled himself from the dishes before him. and asked for those not under his hand, unless his request were forestalled by his neighbors' courtesy. Gradually his application became less regular; his attention wandered, he began dropping words, distributing glances; he swallowed half a dozen of the nondescript confections unquestioningly, without critical perception. He finally took a last long drink, and leaned back with a gentle sigh. The King, whose speech to his guest had been mistily covering a subject of interest long ago, but at this date generally forgotten, felt that a period was put to the necessity of entertaining him in that particular way.
"The silver flutes!" he commanded in the kingly tone he had found again; "the dancing maiden!"
Consternation made the people quite silent for a moment. After a subdued consultation, two slipped from the dimlit banquet room.
One came back after a time, half dragging a little lad with big dark eyes full of alarm. The lad held a rural instrument with only a few stops. His leader set him on a step at some distance from the lights, and after a whispered threat ordered him to play. The youngster blew a few frightened notes, while all looked at the King.

The old man nodded, smiling dreamily. "That is it! It is the clear silver tone! He is a musician of worth," he said to the guest.
66 He was a
gift to me thought equal to half the spoils of a

conquered city, having been instructed by one who was instructed even by him whose hand had divine cunning. Again that passage! That was well!"
The people appealed to the guest with significant faces; some beyond the range of the King's sight made explanatory gestures.
The guest showed no surprise, but let his eye roam among the faces, silently gathering knowledge.
Soon returned the other messenger. Behind him walked a woman with a shy, deprecating face. She looked shamefacedly at the company, and let down from her arms on to the steps near the youthful pipe-player a young child that she settled and covered comfortably before leaving it, glancing over her shoulder at the King while she did this. She then let drop her outer garment, and appeared in a thin kirtle, fit for dancing; she shook out a long bright scarf.
The rings on her arms jingled as she did it.
"It is Meroe," said the King, softly. "Dance the step of the winged snake, my Meroe, with the twists and little leaps."
The woman looked over at him with a helpless expression. Her face, in which the eyes were sweet as a cow's, was lengthened with a desire to cry. She was not young; her dress, the worse for time,

did not become her; to twist and leap must be an effort repulsive to her at this date. She turned resentfully a moment to the man who had brought her; he frowned and motioned to her with his chin. She cast an instinctive glance at the baby, who slept in peace, and resignedly threw herself into position, filled the scarf with air so that it rounded in a half-circle above her. She had not forgotten the steps of the dance, but the pavement seemed a solid thing beneath her feet, not a cushioned spring as once; the watching eyes discomfited her as never in the old elastic days. She danced as if all her movements had been shortened by shackles, and with that protesting face.
To the King there was a streak of brightness wavering here, flashing yonder; he caught the beating of feet, the rustle and the brazen tinkle, - these sufficed for him. He murmured now and then, "Bravely done! So! so!"
The stranger's eyes had been attentive on the woman since she entered.
She had danced but a moment when he waved his hand and spoke, "Let the dancer rest, King. She is tired to-night."
The woman heard this and stopped short, looking doubtfully.
"That is her art," the old King chuckled softly. "That languor is assumed, my honored brother, merely to add another grace to her motion. But,

Meroe, dance briskly, child. Make armlets and
anklets rattle bravely. Ha!" he exclaimed fret-

fully, "who inadvertently is treading on a cat?
Have a care! Have a care, I say!"
The child had awakened, and cried. Meroe ran
to it.
There was a moment's confusion. An attempt
was made to stifle the noise, while a swift comedy
was under breath rehearsed.
"It is
But the guest now spoke to the King,
Meroe's child. Have you forgotten so many
things, venerable King? Years have passed since
she danced before you last. Try, gracious Majesty,
to clear the mists from your mind; for I have but a
night to stay, and I would willingly learn the rea-
son of all this strangeness. Why is the city below
so silent and so neglected? All the cheerful arts
forgotten, and weeds growing in the streets? Why
are these fair halls falling to decay? Why are
your hearts and eyes full of shadows, your faces so
dolefully pale, not saddened with recent sorrow,
as I see, but lengthened and made empty by a habit
formed in an ancient day of woe and fear? Why?
Why?"
-
The guest felt his garment plucked by the man
nearest him, and, looking, saw a warning, frightened
face, and beyond it, and all about him, other
astonished, reproachful faces. He saw the old
minister stretch out his arms with an imploring
gesture, moving his lips inaudibly.
The King had turned his vague old face full on the
guest, and looked at him with the fixity, the startled
look of suspension, of a blind man listening to the

sound of footsteps dawning in the distance. The
furrows on his forehead worked with the effort at
concentration. All was hushed. His breath then
began to tremble and come shorter; he put out his
gaunt hands gropingly, and, while his fingers caught
at the air, made faint sounds, as a dumb beast in
misery. At last, while here and there the breath of
some unheeded servant came forth shuddering with
sympathy, the tears broke over his eyelids.
The stranger rose to his feet and made a vigorous
gesture, as if to sweep away from about him the
oppressive influence of this affection.
"Why this? Why?" he said with his unsub-
dued voice, that had yet the velvet of youth and
kindliness. "Is there anything so bad that it can-
not be remedied? There is but death unchange-
able; and the sorrow for that, I have seen it, is
wild at first, but exceeding gentle after. I have

seen many an evil, many a wrong; they can be conquered. Various ones have I destroyed, and various righted."
He went to his weapon; he rested both hands confidently upon it, looking over at the solemn people. He declaimed with a pride so simple that it was dignified, "There was a monster, seven-headed, a feeder on man's flesh, filling with fear a region through which I passed. The king there exposed to its greed maidens and youths. I slew it; I slew him too.
"There was a reef on which many fair ships were broken, the defeated mariners drowned. I split

and scattered the rock; deep keels now plough the water safely where it stood.
"There was an unholy horde of small malicious beings, half-beast, infesting a goodly green country inhabited by a race of noble, uncunning, broad-eyed men. I ridded the earth of them.
"A fair young maid there was, peerless, whiter than milk, slight as a palm, sweet to please a god. She was stolen while she slept. But I tracked him to his stronghold in the heart of the hills. I delivered and gave her back to her mother's arms.
"And there were giants, five playful, mischievous brothers, doing harm in wantonness, laying waste the human harvest, choking the crystal springs. I tamed them.
"Generously, King, you have provided for a mighty hunger and its mightier brother, thirst. I would pay you with my service. Who oppresses you? What has brought you to this low state, little better than that of the listless dead? Say if there is aught in which a good arm can avail you. I think there is little this cannot do!" And while his face caught fire, and his nostril spread, he held up the powerful right arm with a serene youthful assurance, so large and reposed that it was lifted. far out of the domain of vanity.
The minister shook his head, and looked in an anguished way toward the King, who had grown very small in his great chair; his head had dropped on his breast, so low that the face could no more be distinguished. A murmur of grief passed through

the assembly. The guest caught in this stifled utterance the moaned name of "Polidorus !"
He turned to the one whose lips he thought had let it drop; and, singling him out with his finger, "Who is he?" he asked directly. "What has happened to him?”
The answer came below breath, confused, from many at one time, "Garden deadly in a dog's shape-

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"Not he alone," spoke in fearful undertones the minister, becoming more coherent, and seeming to find at last though he kept his eye sideways in awe upon his master an old man's natural interest in communicating strange secrets, "not he alone, but many, the best and bravest among us, always the best and goodliest! Some roam in the deadly garden, rooting at the trees with swinish snouts and tusks; some lie sluggish in the loam with the pitiless sun on the scales that tightened around them at the spell; some are in the branches, blind black birds hanging in bunches by the nails of their feet; some are but mournful butterflies large as swallows, with no strength to rise high in the air and escape, only to flit from one swamp-flower to the other, growing heavier and heavier with poison, and sick unto death of its sweetness. But he, the noblest hope of his gracious age," he pointed to the king, "the child of Amalthea, dove-eyed! who was the child of his happy years, he in the shape of a dog fawns forever on the same feet —”
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"Who did this cruel thing?" cried the guest, impetuously.
"A woman
a sorceress," came the answer from many, with a rising sibilation of hatred.
"A woman?" asked the guest, a little blankly, and took his seat again, and looked at them for their explanation.
"She lived below in the city. She had learned strange arts. A noble gentleman, who it was known had importuned her with love, and fre-quented her house, disappeared. After all else, her dwelling was searched for him. It was found that the little black panther she kept for a pet, snarling and fierce, but subdued by a sign of hers, had his very, very eyes. His sister recognized them, his heart-broken mother, too. She was driven. from the city with stones, the panther bounding beside her. She went into the valley beyond, down where the ground is treacherous and the green things of earth grow more than naturally fast, fed by the stagnant waters. A house rose for her there on white pillars, none can tell us how. But the memory of her stayed behind, for she was lovely beyond the rule of women; the breath of her lips. seemed to throw him that heard into a dream wherein nothing mattered but that the singing should not cease. The fame of her endured and tormented the minds of youths in their sleep; when love-longing awoke that has rise in itself, in the

season, in the age of the dreamer, it turned perversely to the dangerous, mysterious one. Before

her emptied house many a one lingered with a troubled heart, for it seemed that the sound of her laughter, mocking and sweet, hung about it; many a one crept through the ruined rooms in secret, lured on by he knew not what, - and some day vanished toward the swamp and was not seen again. Each one thought without a doubt he of all would return, he of all would conquer. A few that went failed in their search for her long enough to have sight of the beasts that roam in the deadly garden, and recognize the yearning human eyes; they found wisdom in their horror, and returned to us with the awful report. In bands sometimes we have gone forth to assail and destroy. But arrayed against such as have passed the perils of the shifting ground have stood the beasts, formidable in her defence; and we cannot let loose the volley of our arrows and stones against those miserable companions, brothers and sons and fathers. And now we are resigned: let the gods provide! but all joy is gone from us.
Those whose kindred remain on the field of battle, after years rejoice again: a widow has been seen to smile, an orphan forsooth to dance! but there is no lessening to the weight of the sense of their dumb enduring anguish, beasts that were free and goodly men! The heart can conceive of nothing worse. And still, now and then, untaught by all our warnings, goes one. the sorceress thrones among her crouching minions, most strangely lovely still, one says who did not look in her eye, but saw the reflection of her face
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And

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in the water, was advised, and withdrew, lovely with a baleful grace
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The guest, who had been listening with broad eyebrows lifted, was now startled to feel his arm seized by two hands. He turned; the King's face, every wrinkle full of hatred, was near his, - the old man's eyes glowed in the far depths of their sockets, two balls of pale fire. Wilt thou kill her?" he said. "Wilt thou kill her for me, strong stranger?"
""
The stranger freed his arm with a decisive gentleness, repulsed the King softly, yet so that he found himself seated again in his stately chair. He

gathered his brows slightly; and his eyes, lifted above all the faces, so that the sight of them should not divert him, expressed a certain wonder and bewilderment.
"Kill her?" he said slowly, pondering aloud.
"How does one kill a woman?"
He half lifted his club, and looked at it foolishly, and laughed a short laugh that was scarcely a laugh, at the image that passed through his mind.
"How does one kill a woman?" he repeated, with those puzzled brows.
66
No!" he said loudly to the King, shaking his locks with a mind freed of all hesitation, "I will not kill her for you!"
Nobody spoke. All looked at him, helpless and hopeless. He looked at them with a bold and brilliant eye, that as it dwelt on their discouraged faces became a trifle helpless too.

270
GARDEN DEADLY.
"I cannot explain minutely how it is," he said almost apologetically, with a touch of young modesty in regard to his own conclusions as opposed to those of the noble company; "but I know that it cannot be done! Think for yourselves, that had mothers in whose arms you lay. They may not have been thought good or beautiful women, but they were sweeter to you, I trow, than man could ever be. Heaven determined that it should be so ! Heaven gave them that for a defence," he went on, gathering heat, "conquering beauty! conquering weakness but most supremely the power of imposing on man the dream that in those soft hands. are keys to provinces of undreamed sweetness he of himself could never reach. Not all are beautiful? Not all are sweet? But who agrees to that?" he asked magnificently; then, as if the mature man foreshadowed in him had caught this sound critically, he blushed, convicted of youth, and hesitated, proceeding grandly after a moment, "Remains in any case, that the least lovely is defended still by her weakness. And where one turns utterly to evil, as this one of whom you tell me, her extreme punishment must be left to Heaven
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"And, waiting for that, others must worse than perish? Say you so, man of fine words?" asked a bitter voice.
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Where men turn to beasts, trust me, it is not without fault of their own. But that shall be no more," he said. "Against that I will provide. Where lies the dangerous garden?"

GARDEN DEADLY.
271
He rose and walked to the window, curtained

against the night. He swept aside the folds, and looked forth.
The valley slept; the sky was alive with stars that looked, on the first moment of gazing, as if they were moving rapidly in and out to some vast dance-measure unheard of earth. Gradually they grew quiet and fixed and bright.
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"There!" pointed the one who had followed, there, under the shining figure of the spear-head, whereof the chief star is a lurid blue
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The great guest sought with his eyes the heavenly sign, and dropped them to the jagged black of the cypresses in line with it.
After a moment, "Good," he said.
In the smallest of the dawn he was troubled in his sleep by feebly insistent thrusts in his side. Before opening his much unwilling eyes, he was conscious of being tormented by several long sighs in his ear. He roused himself at last.
It was the old minister sitting by him, all gray in the doubtful light.
"Do not go," he said simply and at once. "I cannot sleep, so I think much in the night. Do not go.
What is the good, -now? The worst. happened so long ago, and cannot be changed. We are used to it all, though last night, speaking of it to some one who had never heard, made it seem new again, and our hearts bled as at a fresh stab. Whole days, I will confide to you, go by without

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our speaking of it, or perhaps even clearly thinking. We are old; we have settled into our poor ways; we have forgotten how to look glad, and there is no one to impel us otherwise, for as we have affected others, so they in turn react on us. We live as in a dull dream, and nothing matters much. The young have left us; but soon we shall ourselves be leaving. The King will go, I shall go, then will begin streaming in the flood of new life. With a new king, new energies, new chances; the streets ringing again, arts flourishing, joy returning. I see it, even with the tired old eyes of my heart. Do not expose yourself to harm for us, goodly stranger. Go peacefully forth at morning and return to your home. It is better going on two than on four; and to walk indeed, indeed, is seemlier than to crawl."
•
The dark chamber that had whispered vaguely back the ancient courtier's senile mumble, rang

with a laugh jarringly gay in that hushed and chilly hour.
"It has ever been thought wiser to reserve mockery for a danger left behind," said the minister, touchily, after the moment needed to recover from the shock that had shaken him.
"True, kind father," said the stranger, respectfully repressing himself; "I had never thought of danger."
But that incongruous idea of danger was offered him again that day.
As he came to the foot of the King's road, and

shaded his eyes, looking for points of guidance to the land lying under the starry spear-head, he found beside him the dancing-woman of the night before.
"C
She held her child; she looked at him kindly and sadly out of her brown cow-eyes. Do not go," she said, and stopping, half abashed, said nothing more except with her eyes, which rested on him a moment, and then shyly ran down her own figure, to confirm her in her satisfaction that now she was clad in a manner becoming her age and state.
The stranger looked at her in amusement.
She shook her head at his frank, mirthful eye, and said again more insistently, "Do not go. So many have gone already. Why must it be the manliest will go forth to feed that fiend, — whom the gods curse! whom a loathsome disease overtake! A horrid blight, like rust, eat out her features, even the eyes from their orbs!
Oh, yes,
I will hold my tongue. But you are rash to go.
Do not go !"
He became aware of a group of other women, children mixed among them, looking at him from a little distance, as if they had come to see what answer he would make to the dancing-woman who perhaps had told them the events up at the King's dwelling.
There was a sweet young thing with a bright cloth on her brighter hair, a little in advance of the others. She stared at him with appealing, moist eyes.

He laughed out at her softly, and put forth his hands in unconcealed delight; thereupon, shook his head, grew grave, looked a moment far away into the blue, and, swinging his weapon over his shoulder, strode off without a backward look.
On the second day of travel he knew by sure indications that he must be nearing the spot.

The character of the landscape had been insensibly changing. Here richer dews fed the green; the sun gave intenser color to the flowers, the rocks, the earth itself.
The ingenuous eye could not pass over the altered aspect of things in indifference. It was forced to follow the floating insects, so large and of such unlikely brilliancy it seemed a wonder they could fit without noise; forced to linger on the luxuriance of the vines begarlanding the branches; to marvel at certain strange vegetation scaling the air from the spaces between the fat furry leaves of the undergrowth, a vegetation such as we should see if the tiny plant of the mould had grown to gigantic proportions without losing its delicacy. This blurred the distances here and there, baffled the eye which at first took itself to be a victim of its own dimness; of so airy a texture was this plant, one brushed it down with a touch that scarcely felt it.
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The trunks of the tall myriad and myriad-leaved trees were sheathed with moss; the roots lay in moss, like nests of snakes asleep under a velvet quilt.

Here and there in the green-gold dusk, near to the ground, shone a pale disk, the shade of a rosy cheek. When the traveller got near, it seemed to have the texture too of a rosy cheek, but feverish to the eye and damp-cold to the touch, disfigured by a soot-black mole.
There were flowers with petals like spears of flame, that seemed to flicker rather than to bloom; and curious irregular-shaped flowers with two leaves like twisted ears, something eager in the crane of their necks, the poise of their heads, as if they were on the alert for some detested passer, and making ready to spit. And there were lazy, flesh-colored flowers, too heavy to be moved by the air, hanging torpidly; the traveller dared not lift one of these to look into its chalice, sure that the stem would snap and a gummy drop ooze from the decapitated stalk, disagreeably like blood. Stooping, he saw thrust toward him half a dozen little soft swollen tongues; the flat sweetness from them sickened him.
And starry satin-faced flowers there were, bending on the traveller the innocent mesmerism of their gaze; the back of each petal was coarse and hairy as the rankest nettle, and like to sear the skin that brushed it.
The hero looked at all in unguarded wonder.
What he saw had an invincible fascination for the eye, disquieting as it might be to another sense.
Though he perceived all clearly, it seemed to him.
at moments he was not surrounded by real things,
but moving in the dream of a stifling night.

His feet now and then sank into the ground, that looked solid enough under the mat of leaves and moss; sometimes he felt a live thing slip away from under his tread. He caught through the trees gleams of still water smitten by the sun, fragments of a pond, coated over with iridescent scum, above which a swarm of mote-like creatures dancing.
It was very warm. He felt at one moment as if his lungs got the air through a moist cloth laid across his nostrils and mouth. A cloud swept over his eyes; it was as if a veil were drawn past them swiftly, then more and more slowly. He suddenly laughed out aloud, because he had caught, in the act of forming, the thought that it would be pleasant to stretch on the ground and sleep off this drowsiness. His laugh rang strangely in the mute dream-like forest, and seemed to have torn away the cob-webs obstructing his breathing and vision. His laugh melted into a long lingering smile; and he sang as he went on with vigorous strides, resolutely jerking up his foot when it stuck. Should he not be near the end of his journey? He had travelled the length of time directed, but met none of the difficulties foretold for those that went hostilely.
Evening now neared; darkness was rising from the ground about him, as an exhalation. He looked up at the sky; it was still bright and intense over-head as a color fixed by fire; in the direction he faced the blue was turning green. He quickened his step through the shade that climbed as an impalpable gray tide.

He saw a whiteness beyond the utmost trees ahead, and thought: Could he, when the land seemed so low, be coming out on the brow of a hill with an open view of the sky?
He came to the last of the trees, and stopped. He stood on the edge of a clear round space. It was the shimmering of marble had deceived his eyes.
He gazed without moving.
At the furthest point of the open was a white structure resembling in shape a large and beautiful shell, curving over a seat; at each end of this began a row of columns, bridged from one to the next, the whole curving in a semi-circle about a marble pit, not so deep but that the water in it, where not reflecting the sky, was a clear pale green.
In the cypresses that formed a rampart behind the shell, the shadows were gathered; above shone the sky still bluish, streaked with clouds of so uniform a pink that a moment's illusion gave one to believe he looked on a celestial curtain with rents in it revealing a rosy atmosphere beyond.
The wanderer's eye for the first moment seized

only the large lines of the picture: the glade was spacious; the further curve of it far indeed.
Now his eye searched for all it might see before the flush went altogether out of the clouds, and its illuminating reflection perished alike from the polished marble and the water. Something stirred.
A cumbrous dark animal, swinging his head from side to side, rose from the ground, and went slowly

humping down to the water to drink. He stretched his ungainly muzzle; he was lapping. An angry snarl was heard; and a lithe striped creature that had crouched on the pool's brink, drinking, before this other came, leaped and fastened fiercely on his head. There was a howl. Then what had been merely spots on the scene, passed over by the eye as ordinary accidents of landscape, took on appearances of life, moved, gave forth low sounds, crawled, ran, bounded, flew to the edge of the splashing pool where the quarrel had place, and joined in making a formidable, angry hubbub. It increased, increased, until suddenly a clear human voice dominated the confusion, rose, imperiously commanding.
The furious voices sank to a murmur, rapidly tapering off to perfect silence.
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The hero's heart had given a leap at the shout of that voice. He looked searchingly. The pink had gone from those high clouds, as a light blown out. Against the cool whiteness of the marble, he discerned a figure all unlike the others, a slender, perpendicular, lonely figure, high above the shapes dispersing from about its feet. When all was quiet near the troubled pool, the arm that had been stretched high was lowered; the figure withdrew to the marble conch.
The hero moved toward it deliberately, though his heart was not quieted yet from its ringing in echo to the voice. As he passed a shadowy mass, his eyes met two balls of pale green fire shining

fixedly on him from its darkest. He placed his feet with some care to crush nothing; here and there, on either side of his path, kindled at his approach round jewel-like objects; always in pairs, - pale golden, as might be, or pale green; and from a dark laurel branch that thrust itself toward him between the marble pillars, shone as if grains of the pomegranate with a live light of their own, two and two, two and two.
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His foot, spite of the instinctive care with which he progressed, now came in contact with a substance that had an elastic firmness not belonging to

mossy earth. As he was about to step over the impediment, a patch of light dawned at one end of it, a mist of fiery breath showed the interior of a large red mouth distended in a silent yawn. As if this yawn had been catching, from various points of the garden dawned similar tufts of light, singular blossoms of vague flame fringed with long teeth, shining a moment, then extinguished.
seen
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He had reached the shell. The figure he had - he never doubted its being she he had come so far in search of- sat in the hollow with a large bird on her hand. He could not well determine if she were feeding the bird or only stroking it lightly now and then. She turned her head toward him a moment as he approached, but gave no other sign of attention. Without speaking, he took a seat in the curved shell opposite her, and composedly contemplated what the light allowed still to be seen. Little could he detect but a gray silhouette, that

yet even in its indistinctness seemed to him possessed of a peculiar grace. He strove to pierce the shadow, to find the features of her face; he could catch only the twin shifting silver gleam of her eyes.
She continued busying herself with the bird, talking low to it from time to time in a language barbarously like the twittering heard among the trees. A perfume was in the air; he could scarcely think if it were exhaled from her garments, or diffused from the clusters he dimly perceived to be hanging over the topmost rim of the shell.
Now, as through the shadow he uninterruptedly peered at her, he saw break below the still distinguished whites of her eyes the silvery crescent of a smile. He watched with a vaguely troubled sense this mockery of an unseen face, his eyes impotently searching for more. The trouble he felt arose from a half realizing that he could not look away from the eyes and the smile, to prove if it were their power that held him, or his own aversion to letting them stare at him without the defence of his fixed glance; and that, gazing so into the dark, the weariness of his straining eyes was spreading through all his being. The effect of his hard journey was upon him as if he had been but a man of common strength, numbing him, blotting out his voluntary thoughts, and substituting for them a dreamlike jumble of images of all that had passed before his eyes in the last days, and much that had not. The flowers of the strange forest swam glimmering before him; the

soft mould-plant waved and floated as a dimness in the eye itself, waved and came across his face like a puff of damp air; a blackness, the shadow of a bat, seemed hovering over his brain, making ready to settle. When by an effort almost painful he cleared his mind of these delusions, he saw again through the shadow the white of her eyes and smile.
Fixing his attention once more on these, he found the steady attention they bestowed on him oppressive; the consciousness of this unknown being, warm with life, possessing in its immobility every possibility of motion, in silence thinking manifold thoughts, all unseen at arm's-length from him, gave him an uneasiness he had not felt in many a perilous encounter. As he sat in the prolonged stillness, he became, by a newborn sensibility, conscious of subtile things not apprehended in the busy daylight of the passing of time, he seemed to feel its tread on the air!-of the distinct fiery particles composing his own body, and the life-tide coursing through them, and the hot forge in his side.
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"Witch!" he exclaimed aloud suddenly, and laughed from his eased heart at the comfortable return of all his normal feelings; and laughed louder, at the thought that a moment before he had felt all the skin of his body stiffening with rapid changes from frost to fire, and this at the mere sense of eyes turned on him in the dark!
A low purling laugh came as a closing cadence to his.
A spell thereupon seemed to snap. The bird

spread its wings, and flapped slowly upward into the cypresses; an animal that had lain near, identified with the ground, rose and shook its coat. As if the vibration of their laughter had set it free, a breeze came up and ran lisping through the leaves, stirred the clouds that had hung motionless, rolled them along the stars like smoke with a red spark here and there.
"Come, O stranger," the woman said, rising and putting out her hand for his, "I will lead you to my house."
They passed between the pillars, through the night of the laurels and cypresses, he confidently letting himself be led.
Again he perceived through the shadow the pallor of marble.
Under the nocturnal sky rose stately a dwelling, unsubstantial to the eye as moonlit mist, save where at one point shone through the portal a rosy light, showing, as they neared it, an avenue of retreating pillars, flushed with the reflection of a guarded flame.
They mounted the steps, she leading him.
They came into the soft light of the interior.

They came beneath the lamp, that was a gum burning in a hanging golden cage.
There he stopped. She pulled a second on his hand, then turned to see why he hesitated. He dropped his weapon, and with his freed hand took her other hand, and held her before him under the light, to see her well.
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She saw not fit to struggle; she threw back her head a little, and watched him from between almost closed lashes, not smiling, but with the hint of a smile on her lips.
He seemed to have lost the sense of time engaged in that study. He could never have told how long he kept her standing before him, and gazed, unabashed, yet unbold.
At last, from the depths of his heart, he exclaimed, "Excellent! It is excellent!" and let go her hands, and smiled frankly into her eyes.
He made a movement to proceed further on their way, seemed to forget his purpose, and withdrew a little to consider her again, as if not doubting that she would remain for his pleasure.
And she contented him. She lingered under the light, fixed in a supple posture that took away from her height, her head somewhat lowered now, looking at him through her lashes and drooping hair.
He saw from the relation of the silver of her eyes to the silver of her smile, that flashed out clear amid the soft dark tones of her face, that her head must have been poised just so when they sat in the dusky garden.
Her body was veiled by a green tunic of silken mesh, so sheer it concealed her lissome roundness as little as does the last wash of the tide conceal the shelving sands. It clung about her limbs sweetly, drawn into long thin folds by so slight a weight even as that of the gold design on its hem.
Her hair clothed her better; it made her a mantle

of black, soft as silk, dividing, as she moved, into long rippling strands. The cheek it shadowed was the tint of an unripe peach that has seen but one hot day, when the sun found it among the leaves an hour, and set a pink stamp amid its velvety green. In the clear pallor of her forehead her eyebrows writhed subtly, two little beautiful black asps in guard over the mystery of the eyes. Her smile was as a dark crimson flower by some marvel exposing, when it opened, dewdrops turned to pearl.
The whole vision of her was dizzily sweet. A man could hardly reach the point of being satisfied with gazing upon it.
"I thank you," she said, nodding to him slowly

at last, "for standing so long, that I might undisturbed read your face. You are indeed a goodly man, and I have taken much delight. Now I will lead you to my hall, where you shall have to eat and drink and rest. You have come to me over many leagues of a fatiguing road, and are weary enough, I know."
"Not so weary," said the hero, genially, "but I can still carry this, and carry you." He stooped to take up his club, then took up her gently on his arm, combating not for a moment the desire, simple as a child's, to hold a thing that seemed to him so lovely.
She placed one arm about his neck, and with the other pointed the way. They threaded passages; they went through empty chambers. He perceived a dog following them at a distance, a melancholy
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dog, that slipped along half crouching, watching them with an anxious, humble aspect.
They stood at last in the hall. All appeared there as if she had known of his coming, and had made ready for a princely guest.
Beside a basin hollowed in the floor and filled with purest lymph, that glimmered and bubbled incessantly under a fringe of water-flowers, were spread thick skins for a couch. Hard by these, ordered on a table so low that one reached all upon it without effort, were viands rich and strange.
The hero let down his exquisite burden, and looked slowly around, opening his sense to the fairness of all. All was indeed most fit for delight. He took the place offered him on the couch, and unhesitatingly ate and drank what she served him.
Not quite as in the King's house did he partake; he satisfied himself here with less devotion to the task, watching his hostess the while, his pleasure in her grace finding its way easily to his face.
He knew never if they were hours so, in dalliance over that enchanted meal, or only minutes. The lights at last seemed to him growing dim; a cool grayness spread through the air. His eyes were heavy. He was not afraid to lie down and sleep disarmed; caution and mistrust were at this date alike foreign to his temper. A consequence of having found himself always sufficient in the moment of danger was his habit of letting alone all care of it before. He stretched upon the skins. As his eyes closed, he felt a cold touch on his hand. He opened them.

The melancholy dog was crouching near. It had thrust its muzzle against his palm, and looked at him with tragic eyes charged with meaning.

"I know. I know. Polidorus !" said the hero,
laying a kind hand on the rough head; and from
sudden sadness he had scarcely any more desire for
slumber.
"I will sing while you go to sleep," said softly
the lady, who had seated herself beside his pillow.
"I will sing you my long song."
...
She began singing. Never could he surely tell
of that night what in it was dream, and what
reality; nor could he ever tell how long it lasted:
if it were but a single night or many nights. He
remembered dimly seeing beyond a distant series of
arches alternate light and darkness, but never knew
if they were nights and days, or the flickering of a
dying lamp.
At last the music stopped.
he heard some one praying.
Sing on, —sing on!"
"Now sleep!" she said. And over his face
seemed spread the smothering night of her hair, and
deep sleep fell on him.
When he woke, he found himself lapped in deli-
cate darkness. It was as if sunshine so brilliant
were without, it warmed and penetrated the marble
walls; they showed as a hand held between the eye
and a flame.
He rose sitting; he heard the water murmur;
he remembered all, but the last thing he re-

membered seemed to him to have happened long
ago.
He got to his feet, and stretched his sleep-numbed
body. He did not know to-day that instinctive joy
in feeling himself a free, conscious being again with
which he usually saluted the morning: his blood
ran languidly; his limbs were heavy; he felt no
eagerness for any adventure. As he came to a
consciousness of his condition, the fibres of his will
braced and steeled themselves, and became the
stouter, perhaps, that he felt his actual muscles lax.
A thrill of tenderness passed through him at
memory of the loveliness he had closed his eyes
upon, of the voice that had lulled him. He did not
forbid his emotion, but indulged it; he knew from
that instant what his purpose was.
Even as he sent his glance in search of her, she
came toward him with a greeting.
Now she led him forth into the air.
They stood upon a terrace above the garden.
The sunshine lay sleepy upon all. It was a vast
stretch of green, luxuriant yet orderly, boughs and
vines and bushes, grassy spaces, here and there the
glowing colors of flowers. All was still as a painted
scene.
—
Servants of hers- strange servants, overgrown,

half-witted girls, with hair like coarse flax hanging over their cheeks and empty eyes, creatures that somehow scarcely seemed to have got life from the same law that gives it to other human beings - brought gold-fretted seats for them, and food and

wine. He watched those dumb girls with indefinable discomfort, till they had vanished.
He took his seat; and she, instead of sitting, knelt beside him, against his knees. They were gentle and familiar with each other as if their union had been from old, and could never know an end.
They ate and drank in the blue shadow of the house, looking off into the stilly yellow sun-world. When they had finished, they sat in silence. There scarcely seemed need of speech while she knelt with her arms against his breast, and her eyes fixed upon his. In the broad light, her eyes were brilliant precious stones, green, shot with fine threads of gold; his were quiet seas.
Their silence, from sweet, became at last a little sad, as the sweetest thing prolonged will do.
"(
Then "You are not the same to-day!" she said in that voice which, melting the heart, yet vexed it with discontent that such music could be seized by no sense but the ear, and must die on the air as common sounds died. 'You are not the same! You are thinking a divided thought, one half away from me. Is it not sad, beloved? You sit there, and I at your feet; and we look at one another, and my eyes are swimming up into the blue of yours as a green-finned fish in the sea that is its home, and very near we seem, but are far indeed. You think I know not what! You mean I know not what! Ah, my heart sickens and groans, as when in bloom of life looking out to rejoice over the fair -

morning earth, we see waved across the sky the funereal ribbon of the crows; and we remember that all comes to an end, that love, beauty, de-
—
Ah, my
light, go at last to make fat the crow.
heart aches! For you, in that you are braver, kinder, greater, comelier than any I ever saw, I love truly as never I loved. All these petty ones wandering in my garden I punished, for they offended me with petty loves. You would have slain them.
had you heard; I, magnanimous, made them merely beasts, and let them go. But you, to you I yearn to show the very heart's heart of happiness.
And yet how can that be? How can I completely,

endlessly love you, if I can never be sure but there
is treachery to me in the dark of your head, behind
the impenetrable crystal of your eye, that seems so
clear? And in me it is so tenderly to love! Listen
to my words, and heed: if we shall be utterly,
utterly happy here in my beauteous house, my
beauteous garden, what you must relinquish for
my sake is that which makes you think a different
thing from me, to will a thing I know not of.
Yield up what keeps us parted and strangers to
the end, fast though our hands be locked; so we
shall be one, so you shall be blissful. Give over
to me your will, my young hero, nothing but so
little a thing! And I shall know that indeed you
love me, shall know what I may do!"
—
The hero looked down into her soft wonder-
ful face while she spoke, quietly, with an eye of
pleased affection. He shook his head. "Not that!"
19

he said at last. "And yet happy shall we be, I
think."
-
She pressed against him, coaxing anxiously with
her lovesome eyes, appealing with her silent open
lips. He shook his head, and looked away from
her over the sun-smit garden. "Not that," he said,
after a time. "I cannot find good words to say the
reason, but it is not fit, - for me or for you. I will
tell you what I mean to do." He took the lovely
face between his hands. "This house I will lay
low, bring down pillars and arches, hack it small,
and so make it that none can dwell in it hence-
forth forever. And the forest I will hew down, so
that it shall be a home no more for dank shadows
and slimy beasts. The poor crew that inform the
shapes slinking about your garden -punished
enough! you shall restore and set free. And
yourself I will carry beyond all these things, to the
healthier air, the clearer light, and set you in an
honorable house where your beauty shall be as the
beauty of the perfect rose, a good and a joy to
every eye lighting on it. There we shall be happy
according to the use of simple mortals, in what
measure the high gods allow. But if we have love,
I think little else need be added for happiness.
Lovely are you, indeed, and have entered my heart
surely as an arrow. Nestle safe in its middle warmth,
golden arrow! Now free me from your sweet
arms a little, that I may set about my task.
I am
fresh from my long rest. Tedious in doing it I shall
not be."

"You will destroy my palace?" she asked, un-
clasping her arms slowly, and while withdrawing,
watching him, with her head a little lowered, as her
wont was.
""
It is an evil thing, raised by strange means.
There is a mysterious horror attached to it, despite
all its fairness, as there is to those voiceless girls
whose eyes mean nothing. I will pull it down.
Fear not; I will be quick."
"And my forest you will lay low?" she asked
softly, with her eyes still fixed on him, widened
and glittering.
"It is full of poisonous things. I will cut and
burn it."
-
"But my familiars, — my black panther? and my
dog? and the others?" she asked. In retiring from
him, she had sunk sitting upon her heels. Her
shoulders and head drooped, till her fixed, lifted
gaze reached him through the veil of her hair.
"You will take pity on them; and at my request,
since you love me, as I believe by your eyes that
grew moist, by your voice that broke in saying so,
you will give them back their human shapes.
But if it is impossible, if no charm will avail, then
we will lead them forth and give them back to
those that have mourned their fate. Forgiving
love may sweeten the last of their dumb lives."
""
"And me ?" she asked. What will you do with
me?"
"You," he said, "I will gather up in my arms
and carry out of the wreck into that new world,

where we will build us a home with straight tree-
trunks. On a high point it shall stand, dearest
woman, whence one sees much sky and earth;
within feel of the breath of the fresh salt sea, hav-
ing behind it a grove full of song-birds, that shall
wake us in the pink of dawn, and drive me forth to
hunt or harvest, and call up you to pleasant spin-
ning or plaiting of rushes. Never had I thought of
such things before,— my mind was all on strife and
adventure; but behold! your sweetness breeds in
me the thoughts of a bird when the winds grow
warm with spring, - mild thoughts of nest and
brood. Indeed, I will take you with me."
"You will?" asked the woman,
stroy all, and take me with you?"
66
"You will de-
He nodded down to her, tenderly smiling.
That I will indeed!"
As a flame shoots up, she shot to her feet, and
stood before him, quivering, her face white-hot, her
eyes terrible. Her very hair seemed instinct with

fury; it lashed the air, and licked her body with long black tongues.
"Fool!" she cried, her voice tense with hatred. "Fool, with your conquering air, with your smiling satisfaction in yourself! Spoil and scatter my palace, forsooth! and carry forth me to be your spinning, rush-plaiting drudge! Clearer sky, purer air, forsooth! Beast like the rest! aping the bearing of the gods, have I not seen your eye, too, blue and dull as stone, kindle on me, and felt your stolid hand melt under my touch? Beast in your

heart like the rest! Be changed in outer semblance, too, to what beast you are most like!"
He had sprung to his feet at her first words, and stared at her, helpless, unprepared, as a man at dead of night drawn disarmed from his sleep.
The color had dropped from his face. He stood transfixed.
She was rapidly muttering unknown words, growing louder and louder, till her climbing voice almost reached a shriek. She caught up the gold cup from which she had drunk erewhile, and dashed its dregs into his face.
At that he gave a mighty cry, and stood trembling in every limb, as the noble horse trembles when the wind brings to his ear the roar of the beast against which nature has given him no defence.
He blinked the wine from his horrified eyes. On his bloodless face it made a ghastly purplish stain; it slowly dripped from his beard.
The sorceress, her lips drawn from her teeth, clinched since the end of her incantation, stood stretched to her utmost height, pointing her stiff spread hand at him as a wand shooting poisonous influence from its five points.
Trembling he stood, too overwhelmed to speak a word, or fashion a purpose so slight as that of lifting a defensive hand. The wine dripped from his beard on to his feet; he watched the dark drops stupidly. In this suspense, drawn out to a terrible' fineness, he felt his flesh begin vaguely to prickle.

-
The doom overtaking him, the tightening of the hide, the bristling of the hair.
•
His eyes continuing stonily on his feet, a consciousness now slowly dawned in the sense behind them that in the feet so far had come no change. The wine had dripped on them. He saw no change, no change.
The blood mounted to his face again; his fibres took back their firmness. Looking up, he saw that

it was she now staring at him in an awe growing
greater and ever greater. She crept away with a
stealthy backward movement, not removing her
eyes from his. When the wall prevented her, she
crouched against it cat-like.
"Not a beast!" he exclaimed; his cry was in
one a groan of relief and an exulting shout and a
burst of white wrath. "Me you could not make
into a beast, for in my heart I am not one! What
if my eye warmed over your beauty, what if my
hand softened to your hand? There was in my
mind no cunning, no treachery, but all fairness in
love. Witch! Accursed! It was not you I loved,
as I see, — you of the evil spells, the unholy wiles,
- not you, but the dream! Ay, the ancient dream
of the rugged first man, when, looking first on that
gentler, sweeter likeness of himself, he thought to
make his life complete by it. Witch! accursed!
traitress to me, that was honest! Me, your master,
straight of limb, and tall and strong, you would
have degraded to a crawling thing that seeks the
shadow in shame. Ha! but the ineffectual curse
--

floats in the air still, baffled, unappeased. It seeks
for something to settle on and blight. Upon your-
self I call it! Be beast!-dumb, able to lie no
more with crimson lips too easily heeded; shrink
small, of size to fool and ruin no man more!" And
the hero, white and reckless with overtopping pas-
sion, assumed the posture he had seen her in when
she cursed him, stretched out his spread hand
toward her where she cowered, his eyes fixed and
terrible.
—
She rose shuddering to her feet a moment, slen-
der and sleek. She writhed on the air, and uttered
a long, long, piercing moan that ended as a red-hot
sword plunged into the wave, in a bubble and
hiss. Then she dropped to the ground, and lay
covered over with her black hair, between the coils
of which shone the green and gold of her gauzy
weeds.
All the current of his life had stopped in amaze-
ment. His eyes were fixed upon the still dwind-
ling, changing object that had been she. At last
the throbbing that had convulsed it ceased. It lay
still.
For a long moment he could not move. He
came a step nearer to it at last. The thing pre-
served an elusive likeness to her as she had
dropped, black, green, and gold.
He stooped, and touched it. From among the
coils rose, poising itself delicately, a little sleek
dark head, remotely like the one he remembered,
and looked at him with the same fixed jewel-eyes.

As he gazed, there was thrust at him, swift as lightning thrilling the sky, a forked tongue, quivering, like black flame. He shrank, appalled, unable to remove his eyes from the ruin he had worked.
The sad dog crept near, with his muzzle to the ground, and stood stone-still at a step's distance. From the garden-thickets, empty of life to that moment, peered anxious faces of beasts, summoned by he knew not what mysterious rally-call. They crawled forth slowly, with inquiring eyes, their heads stretched toward the point where the new dark marvel lay. Even a soft black bat ventured out into the light, and flitted blindly about.
The sunshine seemed to have grown yellower and dimmer; under it the gorgeous flowers appeared sickly, the leaves drooped on the trees, as if cut off from the parent fountain. The fair walls, as if seen with keener eyes, showed themselves full of little fissures filled with lichens and mould, eating patches of yellow and gray.
Of a sudden, the dog lifted his face back to heaven, and the silence was torn by a long, long howl, a dumb brute's expression, but of a heart-broken human effect. Other sounds arose from the creatures in the garden, wounding the air painfully.
-
The hero cast up his arms and seized his head in his hands; he choked, and from his eyes the tears burst in a stream.
"What have I done?" he mourned. "In my senseless rage, what have I done? Woe! Woe!

-
Where are the beautiful face, the beautiful body? No more the flower-red lips to laugh, or the heart-melting voice to murmur! So perfect a thing will not be again, not again to the end of the world! And I wrecked it, beast that I am in very truth, hurting her not in self-defence, but in revenge. I might have been patient, and brought about good. That surpassing beauty in itself was wholly good. I should have saved it for the pure joy of the eyes, and the praise of the powers that framed it; for my own heart's peace, alas! I should have saved it."
He dropped on his knees and spread his hands over her, full of pity and horror. The forked tongue was swiftly shot at him; the green eyes glittered angrily; the creature made ready for a spring.
-
“You can sting, I know," he said sadly; "I know, little pitiful, horrible being. But sting not me, for no one henceforth will love you but me;

and having brought about my death, you will be too entirely, drearily alone, unhelped, uncomforted to the end. I will take you with me as I had promised; I will wear you against my breast, poor love. And it shall go hard with us but, wandering over all the earth in search of it, we get counsel from some wise man, some oracular voice in grove or cavern, how to give back the beauteous form I saw fade as a shadow in a dream. Meanwhile, fix your thoughts on good, little green-gold gem.
Be sorry, now you are in woful case your-

-
self, for all the woe you have made in this world. Reflect in your long leisure, repent, contemplate; and having been man with the nature of a serpent, evolve in the shape of a serpent, from out the old unintelligent perverseness, the nature of man, noble at his best, upward-looking, fit to love truth when through many veils he sees it, and choose good when under manifold disguises he recognizes its face. Come."
-
He put out his hand. The darkling object did not lift its head threateningly as before; it did not move. He lifted it; it hung limp over his hand, its bright eyes closed. He placed it about his neck, where her arms had been. The little head hung down upon his breast. He might have thought it dead, crushed out of life by a too great despair, but that it moved a little, blindly, to bring its head nearer his heart. He placed it where it should be faintly shaken by every pulse; and there it remained.
He took his weapon and stepped down into the garden, over which surprising changes were insensibly passing. The trees decreased from their high stateliness; they were more and more like weeds. The fine abundant flowers were gone; there was but here and there a swamp-flower, a brightness where perhaps some leaf was embossed with scarlet warts, or a stump of rotten wood covered with a bright orange-colored exudation.
He came to a round empty space where stones lay scattered in a semi-circle, beside a hollow in the

earth filled with water.
On the edge of it squatted a toad. He looked back. No white dwelling was to be seen, no garden; as far as eye could reach, the swamp.
But he perceived now, following him at a little distance, a strange forlorn herd of men, all shy of the broad bare light, all wofully confused, as it

seemned,- as if at some new condition. They stole forward with the timidity of beasts, fixing on him wistful, uncertain eyes, walking on when he walked, stopping when he stopped.
-
He felt his astonished heart expanding to a great size. He spread his arms full wide.
brothers!" he cried.
""
"O my
O my brothers!" And the great laugh of joy that burst from him was half a sob.
THE END.

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